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ISMAEL

CHILDREN

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**FROM THE BOOKS
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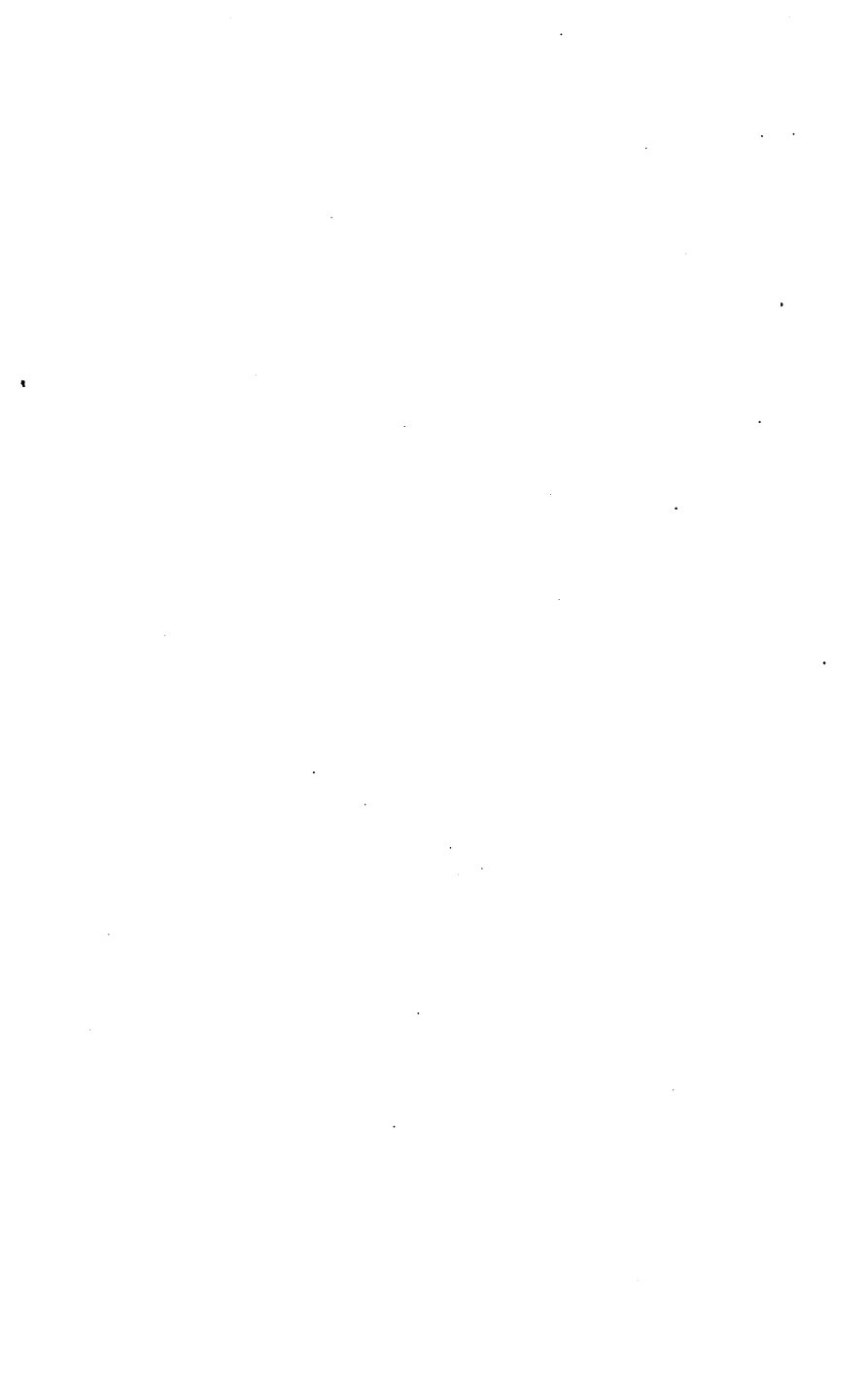
Theodore Jewett Eastman

A.B. 1901 - M.D. 1905

1931







ISMAY'S CHILDREN



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BY THE AUTHOR OF

'HOGAN, M.P.'

'FLITTERS, TATTERS, AND THE COUNSELLOR'

'THE HON. MISS FERRARD'

ETC. ETC.

'An honest tale speeds best being plainly told'

London

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HARVARD COLLEGE
THE BEQUEST OF
THEODORE JEWETT EASTMAN
1931

ISMAY'S CHILDREN

CHAPTER I

'Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor,
For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich ;
And, as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
So honour peereth in the meanest habit.
What ! is the jay more precious than the lark
Because his feathers are more beautiful ?
Or is the adder better than the eel
Because his painted skin contents the eye ?'

It was a fine spring morning—mild and soft, almost warm, although the middle of March had not yet been reached. Blackbirds and thrushes made the clear air ring ; the crows, busy in the tall branches of the elms, exchanged cheerful notes with their neighbours. The full liquid murmur of the river completed the chord most musically, and with it all ran the mellow under-current of a tiny south wind—scarce above a breath—that just lifted and stirred the branches of the osier field. This osier field ran side by side with the high-road, fenced from it by a dike on this side, and on the other bordered by a ten-foot wall in somewhat ruinous condition, over which the tops of fruit-trees were visible, where the ivy and the tufts of parietary plants, grasses—now all dead and bleached—snapdragon, and old and straggling wall-flower, allowed them to be seen. A path, if a sort of irregular causeway of loose stones, sods, and tufts, with here and there the relics of a former hand-rail, deserved that name, ran through the field. The whole field

was a swamp pure and simple, yet the path gave evidence of frequent use. At this moment it was being traversed by a little old woman, who scrambled, jumped, and shuffled her way along at a rate and with a success that argued good practice among the sinuous dangers of the road. She wore a pair of enormous old boots, that had formerly been a man's, and carried an umbrella clutched in her left hand. This last was evidently worn more with a view to ornament than use, for no living human being could have told, without serious examination, at which end it opened. An ancient Paisley shawl reached to where the boots began and the nondescript skirt ended, and the whole edifice was crowned by a very large-sized drawn velvet bonnet, of a fashion at least a quarter of a century old. This odd figure was directing her steps from the high-road—the junction of which with the osier field was announced by a gap in the dike which flanked it—towards the ivy-clad garden wall. She soon reached a point under the wall facing a door that had once been green, to reach which she had to mount some three or four steps, marked by decayed planks and a dilapidated hand-rail, which had long ago been placed there.

Taking a tighter grasp still of the umbrella, the old woman was in the act of hoisting up her heavy foot-gear to the level of the steep steps, when a voice hailed her from the top of the wall.

'Kitty! Kitty Macan! What a time you have been. Did you meet a red-haired woman, and delay to come back and go out again?'

The old woman, between anger and the start the sudden address had caused her, tumbled backward and only saved herself a fall by grasping the rail. The address evidently exploded a ready mine.

'Oh, den! Good work you have dis morning, driving and frightening me. Oh Lord! I am crost, I am—and curst, I am; such a house! dere to say I was at the town las' evening—and notin' else would serve herself an' she knowing well—who else would know it?—dat we was out of tay, but wait till morning to give me work.'

'Come along, Kitty,' urged the invisible Gertrude; 'you will have me late for school.'

'Sweep ye, Godfrey, and Gertrude, and school, an' all den.'

This invective, gasped and sputtered out as Kitty Macan tumbled through the garden door, was in acknowledgment of a handful of mortar and lichens, which at that moment had dropped, not of its own accord, on to her bonnet.

The object of her wrath and projector of the missiles aforesaid dropped lightly off his perch on the wall, and, unheeding of the furious looks of the old woman, strode along beside her. He was a slim, reedy lad of about seventeen, or less, with that foreign look so often seen in the south of Ireland, thick, black hair, and a pale olive skin, curiously long-shaped eyes of an undecided colour, between brown and gray, looking almost greenish now as he half-closed their thick fringes against the sunlight. He was untidily and shabbily dressed,—one elbow was nearly through his old shooting-jacket, and there was a longish piece of wrist and shirt-cuff to be seen at the end of each sleeve.

Kitty Macan grumbled all the way up to the house,—the gooseberry bushes and winter cabbages being to all appearance not less receptive and sympathetic than her young master. They came to a dog-house just before they reached the back door. Godfrey slipped the chain with a touch of his long fingers; a greyhound bounded out and into his arms. Kitty Macan passed on into the kitchen, taking her grievance with her, while master and hound rolled together on the grass.

'Kitty! Kitty! Kitty, you old slieveen!' was her salutation there from a handsome girl of about twelve, who, with a lesson-book in her hand, was pacing about the floor. 'It is a quarter to ten. I wanted to drink the milk. Hurry—ah! do hurry!'

Kitty Macan's answer was to fling open a basket, extract a tin-foil covered parcel therefrom, and lay it with much unnecessary force upon the table. Then she placed her umbrella reverentially in its sanctuary behind the kitchen

door, and finally sat down and proceeded with a demonstratively deliberate manner to untie, remove, and stroke her velvet bonnet.

Gertrude—that was the schoolgirl's name—laughed, caught up the packet of tea, and ran off. Kitty Macan drew a deep sigh, hung the velvet bonnet on its nail on the kitchen dresser, and having put on a white apron, took a kettle, which was boiling wildly, off the turf fire, and followed her along a flagged passage to a room at the front of the house.

There a party of people were assembled, evidently waiting for breakfast. The schoolgirl was seated at table eating bread and butter; another girl, much taller, was seated in the window with an open book in her lap; and the third and only remaining member of the party sat in an arm-chair which had been moved half round from the fireside to the table. She was a very remarkable-looking old dame. A pair of round eyes, bright and hard as those of a bird of prey, lighted up a wrinkled countenance; bushy dark eyebrows contrasted with the thick hair which fell in short snow-white braids from under her black lace cap, along each cheek. A peremptory and metallic-sounding voice was raised high in exhortation as the old servant entered.

'Gertrude! call Godfrey—are you not ashamed to sit down in that manner, like a beast of the field, I protest it is, not to wait for others?'

'It is ten minutes to ten,' observed Gertrude, helping herself to bread.

Her grand-aunt made no further comment. She was busy now making tea in a great old painted china teapot, Kitty Macan aiding. This accomplished, Kitty placed the teapot, which the mischances of time and fate had reduced to wear a tin lid, in the grate amongst the turf ashes, and departed. Miss D'Arcy—that was the old lady's name—pushed back her chair with a sudden movement, so deftly calculated that it brought her right hand within easy reach of a cupboard in the room wall situated beside the fireplace. A bunch of keys was hanging in the keyhole of the door.

Having opened it she pushed the package of tea on to a shelf, shut the door with a smart bang and rattle of the keys, then swung round her arm-chair again and resumed her place at the table.

'Have you called Godfrey?' she asked of Gertrude, looking at that young lady with a fixed directness to which a palsied motion of her head and chin rather added emphasis. Gertrude, taking a large piece of bread and butter in her hands, so as to lose no time, left the room. She returned in a moment, followed by the greyhound and then Godfrey. The dog made straight for the fire, and lay down before it, keeping his sharp muzzle pointed upon the table and its occupants. Godfrey slowly lifted one of his long legs over the back of the chair ready placed for him, and sat down to breakfast, shaking the rather unsteadily balanced table as he did so, in a manner that called forth an impatient protest from Gertrude.

Miss D'Arcy poured out the tea; it was too great an effort for her to lift the teapot, so she stooped it so as to let its contents run out, the cloth generally receiving some small share. Gertrude helped herself to the cup nearest her, Godfrey leisurely cut up his slice of dark-looking country bread. His grand-aunt looked from him to a cup which was intended for him in a puzzled kind of way.

'Marion!' she said commandingly. The student in the window-seat laid down her book and rose obediently. If Godfrey and Gertrude Mauleverer gave the promise of beauty, Marion possessed it, and in no stinted share. She was tall and slim as became her years, which had not yet numbered eighteen, but her deep-chested well-proportioned frame gave indication of a riper magnificence to come. Great long-lashed eyes like her brother's, of a strange undecided tint between gray and brown, marked sweeping brows and a clear olive skin of a uniform paleness. Her hair, a rich blue-black, was brushed and coiled in a knot at the back. She took up one of the cups standing before Miss D'Arcy and laid it beside Godfrey's plate. He rewarded her for this friendly office with a gentle tap on her

hand with his knife-blade. Then she seated herself and began her own breakfast.

No one spoke. Gertrude ate with her eyes fixed upon the clock. Godfrey supported his head with one hand, and appeared to have forgotten every one's existence. His grand-aunt seemed to be absorbed in her breakfast, but she was watching every stir. From the wall, a portrait in pastel looked down on the group. No one could see all the faces in juxtaposition and doubt the relationship for an instant. It was the likeness of the young people's father, a handsome officer in regimentals. Marion and Godfrey's eyes were in shape and colour exactly like those of the picture, only for the moment seeming softer. Marion had the short upper lip, and Godfrey with it the richer tints of skin and black close-set hair. Gertrude's energetic countenance and sudden turns of head betrayed all the fiery recklessness of her soldier sire. They were an interesting trio of creatures, and their surroundings were certainly not out of keeping. One skilled in what a French writer calls the physiognomy of *things* might have found scope for much picturesque inference from the contents of the apartment in which Miss D'Arcy and her three reputed grand-relations were sitting. Everything was old and mostly decayed, a dull-red flock paper covered the walls, a carpet of indescribable texture and colour was on the floor. In the recess beside the fire, in a line with Miss D'Arcy's cupboard, was an old mahogany escritoire with book-shelves. A carved wooden bird seemed to have perched on the summit of this piece of furniture; its head was turned to one side, and seemed to correspond with a fat little gilt eagle on its eminence over the carved mirror of the chimney-piece, which reflected everything in the room broader than it was long. Quaint little miniatures,—a pair of worked-silk screens and a clock in Sèvres china, which seemed to have suffered more than one fall in its circumstances, so chipped and maltreated did it look,—furnished the chimney-piece. The pastel portrait was flanked by double rows of old mezzotint engravings of the last century, the glass in the frames of which was cracked and greatly fly-blown. Opposite to

these, a large old oil-painting, considerably hung right in the dark between the two windows, showed a perfectly black square surface set in a heavily-moulded yellow rim. At the far end of the room a spindle-legged semicircular table stood against the wall; on this table, which was covered by a white cloth, stood an image of Our Lady of Dolours, flanked by two china candlesticks and two Jenny and Jessamy vases full of fresh primroses. Three rosaries—one of carved olive-wood and with a fine ivory crucifix attached, one of tiny red beads, like ripe currants, and one of huge common black beads—lay before the statue; and in a little glass lamp of antique shape burned with the faintest flicker a tiny thread-like flame.

The room had a queer smell as of apples and hay blended. The earthiness that comes up from the boards in a house built upon the ground-floor,—though plenty of sweet fresh air had ingress from the loose-fitting casements,—seemed to weight the atmosphere.

The breakfast was soon over. Gertrude had gone—her long hair flying in the wind, as she leaped her way through the osier bed. Godfrey was stroking the hound and evidently meditating a move. Marion was busy gathering up the crumbs on a plate. Kitty Macan entered, tray in hand, and began to clear away the breakfast things.

‘I heard dere is queer work up at Lambert’s Castle—den—Miss D’Arcy, ma’am.’

Miss D’Arcy turned her eyes upon Kitty with a questioning look.

‘I tol’ you dat dere was an account of a match’ (a south-country euphuism for an offer of marriage—the same being conveyed by a professional matchmaker) ‘sent up dere from Capel’s before Shraff Tuesday for Mary Ahearne. Oh, go ’long, Fly! you baste!’

Kitty Macan waited at this juncture until she had made a voyage out of the room with a trayful of the breakfast gear. When she returned she took up again the broken thread of her story.

‘Harry Capel’s fader and moder were giving him up the place—dey would go to their little farm out on the

Limerick Road. He have no one else to be in her way, and a fine boy, clever proper man. I could not begin to tell you what stock he has. Well—an' now—no! Mary Ahearne she have took something in her head—word came down with their girl Judy; if it is not true I renounce the sin of it, I do.'

Godfrey burst out laughing at the pious tone with which this last was said, and picking up a cap which lay somewhere near, ran out of the room hastily, followed tumultuously by the greyhound. He was joined after a minute or two by Marion. She held her plate of crumbs in her hand. In an instant a couple of pigeons were on her shoulder, cooing and flapping as she divided the crumbs between them.

'They have four eggs in the nest now; she will begin to sit shortly. I must look to the rats, else they'll nip our prospect of young ones in the bud. Godfrey sauntered up and tried to stroke one of the birds as he spoke.

'I wonder,' began Marion—she stopped—'tell me—Godfrey! When did you see Harry Capel?'

'Why?' Godfrey darted a suspicious look at her.

'Nothing—nothing,' she replied. 'I was thinking could Kitty's news be true. I have not seen Mary since Sunday week.'

'Pooh! I imagine so. Why not?' Godfrey curled his handsome mouth into a sneer. 'Come down and see the thrush's nest where she has it in the old elder bush.'

'I wonder if Father Paul knows it,' said Marion as she laid the plate on the ground. The pigeons speedily followed it thither, but Fly with one application of his tongue made an end of its contents, and then dashed after his master. They proceeded leisurely along an alley bordered with fruit-trees that had once been espaliers, but had long ago burst their bondage and shot up and across at their own eccentric will. Grass and weeds fringed the walk, but among these also were polyanthus and primroses and brown wall-flowers just bursting into bloom. The knots of buds on the apple-trees were swelling and white. Here and there pear blossoms were just opening, and gave

their first sweet odours to the air. They had soon reached the elder bush—one of a thicket of recent growth, and self-planted, no doubt.

'Now,' said Godfrey, advancing his head into the branches, 'I expected as much after last night's shower. Now, Marion, bet you sixpence you don't find the nest.'

He drew back. Marion took his place, and peered anxiously among the boughs of the elder, bare as yet, but with every here and there at the joints little bouquets of a vivid green.

A moment elapsed—in-silence. 'Don't breathe in it!' said Godfrey. 'Why, you goose! don't you see that? Run your eye straight along this bough towards the root. Now!'

'Oh—yes—five eggs! poor bird! She'll never escape the cat—so low down as that?'

'She will. I'll take care of that. I have a blackbird's too—in the stone-pine before the house. She has only one egg. I expect these out in a fortnight. I'll put them in the old cage and hang it just here close to the nest, and see if the old ones won't feed them.'

Marion did not answer him. She broke off a cluster of buds as she passed a pear tree and fastened them in her dress. Then she pulled up a cabbage by its overgrown head, and turned off into a yard to feed a couple of rabbits which were there. A goat made herself heard from one of the outbuildings, which were large and rambling. One of these, built outside close to the weir, had been once on a time a mill. There was a race carried across a projecting elbow of the river bank. A Quaker had long ago inhabited the place. He it was who had laid out and stocked the garden and had worked the mill, but as the corn-lands of Barrettstown and the neighbouring country passed into grazing and dairy-fields, and the repeal of the Corn Laws allowed the Americans to send flour into Barrettstown, the mill got less and less to do; the Quaker miller, without waiting to be starved out, sold his plant and removed himself to a commission business in Liverpool. The garden remained to the tender mercies of Nature. The mill fell

into ruin with a celerity not to be matched out of Ireland, and the dwelling-house became the abiding place of Marion, Godfrey, and Gertrude Mauleverer, with their maternal grand-aunt, Juliet D'Arcy, and her devoted follower Kitty Macan, as well as certain adherents pertaining to this last.

CHAPTER II

'There is nothing either good or bad
But thinking makes it so.'

MARION, Godfrey, and Gertrude Mauleverer were the children of Captain Godfrey Mauleverer, a wild Irish officer, the typical Hibernian *militaire* of adventuring disposition and extravagant habit ; who had, with characteristic inconsiderateness retired from the world one or more days after the death of a rich and childless uncle had raised him from his state of military vagabondage to riches and rank.

It might be alleged, however, in excuse for this crowning act of the poor Captain's crazy folly, that he had no reason whatever in the ordinary course of nature to expect any inheritance from his uncle. Mauleverer of Barrettstown was a married man with a thriving family of five children, three of the five being boys when Captain Godfrey, some fifteen or more years anterior to his death, had last heard of his kinsman.

Not one of these five children survived their father, and Captain Godfrey Mauleverer's death being duly reported from a south of England port and confirmed, the next heir, a young man named Tighe O'Malley, the son of the only sister of Mauleverer of Barrettstown, stepped into his uncle's place, and an estate nominally worth seven thousand a year.

Godfrey had been a wanderer since the age of sixteen, when he entered a marching regiment as lieutenant, having purchased the grade with the small inheritance left him by his parents, both of whom died young. Nothing was known

of him by his relations. They had never heard of his marriage, nor had they even indirect knowledge of the fact that some twelve or more years before his death he had, when quartered in a little country town in the north of Ireland, induced a beautiful young girl, then a governess in a county family which had entertained the officers of his regiment, to leave the country with him. Ismay D'Arcy, then barely seventeen years old, belonged to a good old family, which 'the troubles,' the famine years, and then the Encumbered Estates Act, had all combined to reduce to penury. She was a distant relative of the family in whose employment she was, and Godfrey Maul-everer, then the beau-ideal of the seventeen-year-old girl, found it not too difficult to persuade her that it would be a change for the better in her circumstances to follow the drum. Her relatives, she said, were unkind, by which she probably meant unsympathetic. Neglectful they certainly proved themselves to be, for they took no trouble whatever to ascertain if the handsome lieutenant had repaired the wrong he had done the girl. They washed their hands of her and forgot all about her.

Years later, some intelligence reached the head of the house—how, no one was told—that Ismay was dying in Jersey, and that her aunt, Juliet D'Arcy, had been sent for in all haste from her own *habitat* in the mountains of Clare. He put a cheque for twenty pounds in a letter which he sent there and then to Juliet D'Arcy, and bade her ask for more if she found it needed when she reached 'the poor girl.' He was never reminded of this promise. Godfrey was not a man to suffer it, even had there been a necessity, which there was not, for Miss D'Arcy's niece was dying when she arrived, and but a few days afterwards she and the disconsolate husband laid her in her last resting-place in the parish graveyard.

There had been a marriage—'a Scotch marriage, very irregular'—the distraught Godfrey confessed between his paroxysms of grief, Juliet D'Arcy urging him, half-angry, but deeply pitying. He was always intending to be married in church to his darling Ismay. He would have done this

before the birth of Marion, the eldest, but he had been ordered to Malta, and had to leave her behind. Then it was put off and put off, and sometimes it was Ismay's own fault, for at times she would shrink from the avowal, at others urge it passionately. Then, when at last the boy was born, she thought it would be such a slur upon him, and so it was never done.

'But it was a marriage all the same,' protested Godfrey, with tearful sincerity. 'She need not be one bit afraid; they were all right so far as that went, and one day he would run down to Scotland and get her the proofs from the witnesses. He would, indeed, just to please her, some day soon.'

Juliet D'Arcy was as Irish as himself, and every bit as procrastinating and happy-go-lucky. She knew this ought to be done, but they were living out of Ireland, where alone people knew or cared anything for their affairs. The little white headstone in the graveyard bore the inscription, 'Ismay Mauleverer.' The children had no prospects of any sort. Godfrey could leave them nothing. He had nothing but his captain's pay; his regiment was now in Jersey, and there they remained. So day followed day, and weeks slipped into months peacefully and quietly. She was devoted to the children, and before long she became equally attached to their fascinating handsome father, and thus ended by giving herself but little trouble about what had once been the cross and vexation of her very existence. There was no one to remind her of it now, and she let it slip out of sight contentedly enough. Nothing stands still in this life, however, and Juliet D'Arcy was roughly awakened to a sense of her duty and responsibility, once for all and very suddenly.

She had crossed to Havre to make some purchases, one fine July morning, and at mid-day, as she was on the threshold of a draper's shop, she became aware of three familiar faces, and three well-known voices saluted her ears with an accent that roused her consciousness strangely, all speaking at once.

'Miss D'Arcy. I declare! It is herself. Juliet, my heavens! and can it be yourself.'

'Well, well, 'tis most extraordinary, and really agreeable too!'

Juliet recognised three old Clare neighbours and friends who had halted for a rest at Havre on their way for a long continental ramble. She left her shopping at once, only too glad of the encounter, and accompanied her friends—two sisters and their brother—to their hotel, where she spent the major portion of the day talking over old times, and exchanging news, or rather receiving it, for she—impelled by some unaccountable fatal impulse of concealment, for yielding to which she afterwards bitterly reproached herself,—gave them no information as to her whereabouts and occupation. They knew vaguely that she was with her runaway niece, of whose death they had never heard, and that there was a soreness connected with the subject which made it rather hard to approach under the circumstances of a casual meeting such as this. So they respected her reticence, and found plenty of interesting matter of conversation until dinner was over, when Juliet found she must hasten to the Jersey boat. The gentleman of the party, on account of whose ill-health they were travelling, escorted her to the pier. He had been one of Miss D'Arcy's admirers in the old days, for Juliet had been a belle in her time, and this Hyacinth Skerrett had been an old flame. Miss D'Arcy held him such: perhaps he did not remember so much. She took his arm silently, for the encounter with her old friends had waked some not altogether happy memories. She felt depressed, and overcome by a melancholy sense of isolation and homesickness. Her companion was silent also, but it was from another cause.

They soon reached the pier. The little steamer was just starting, and they were the last to arrive.

'Miss D'Arcy,' he said, clearing his throat with an effort, 'I—I—it was a great pleasure meeting you again in this way—it was indeed. And I've been thinking all day of something I did not like to mention—but I don't doubt you'll say I am right. Come on quick, they are going to pull away the gangway. Poor Ismay, her father and I

were boys together! Have you heard of Mauleverer of Barrettstown—Godfrey's uncle he is, you know?'

'Yes! yes!' gasped Juliet.

'Oh, Lord! she's off,' he cried, and sprang past her detaining hand and on to the pier, barely in time before the men hauled up the ladder. He turned and leaned over the edge.

'What? what is it?' cried Miss D'Arcy.

'Write to Father Paul Conroy,' shouted Mr. Skerrett. 'He is parish priest of Barrettstown. Don't you remember Conroy of Ballinavogue? You do. It's his brother then.'

'He is the parish priest of Barrettstown, you say, Paul Conroy,' screamed Miss D'Arcy in her strongest Clare brogue.

'Yes,' shouted back her friend, making, as he did so, a sign with his hand as if to say 'enough is said.' This was perhaps not unnecessary, for Miss D'Arcy was excited enough to have kept up a conversation all the way to Jersey.

Mr. Skerrett took off his hat and waved it; and Juliet, though her limbs were trembling with excitement and her mingled anxiety and terror were so great that she was murmuring incoherent questions still, replied gracefully with her pocket-handkerchief. She gazed back at Hyacinth Skerrett's lean figure as he slowly walked back along the pier, now and again turning his head to watch the steamer as she diminished in the distance.

'Father Paul Conroy,' repeated Juliet aloud. The importance of Mr. Skerrett's words seemed to grow and swell every minute as the tossing wake of the steamer stretched longer and longer behind, leaving the possessor of the secret far remote, and carrying her with her growing burden of bewilderment and anxiety, in solitary perplexity out to sea.

'Barrettstown—the parish priest'—and she pressed her hand tight to her forehead as though she thought thereby to stamp the remembrance indelibly on her brain, of the precious news she had heard or rather the promise of

news. Hyacinth Skerrett—poor dear fellow! how aged he was, thought Juliet—had given her a friendly hint, it was plain.

What could have happened? Mauleverer was Godfrey's uncle, little Godfrey's grand-uncle. How glad she was that she had never mentioned poor Ismay; and yet, might it not have been as well, or better, to have said, just accidentally, '*Poor Mrs. Mauleverer is dead. Did you not see it in the papers?*' when in truth no such announcement had ever appeared. Yes, Juliet thought now that she ought to have forced herself to make that speech, or one something like it. It certainly would have been against the grain to utter it, but she told herself that she ought to have faced the matter and set Ismay's memory right, she herself being dead and gone, and out of reach of all comment. But old habit had prevailed and carried the day. For good or evil she had been silent.

'Mauleverer of Barrettstown and Father Paul Conroy'—the names rang like chimes in her ears, and set themselves to the clanking of the engine and the throb of the paddles. She had seated herself on a camp-stool, and leaning her elbows on her knees, held both her temples with the palms of her hands.

Godfrey might be counted on to know nothing whatever of the portent of Hyacinth Skerrett's enigmatical deliverance. He was not the one to read the riddle. Even if she found him at home, for he was to start that evening on a fortnight's yachting trip with a Sir Harry Somebody or other; probably, if wind and weather suited, would have left ere she arrived. And his promised journey to Scotland! Juliet rose now from her camp-stool so suddenly that she upset it, and began to walk up and down the deck in a fever of impatience. She blamed herself for her supineness and recklessness. The whole future of Ismay's children was now depending on a matter which she had allowed to be thrust into the background as of no importance. What if Godfrey had gone by this, taking the secret with him. What clue had she to discover when and where the irregular marriage had

taken place. Suppose the yacht lost and all lost with him !

She got home at last, how she could not have told. It seemed like an awakening from a hideous nightmare when, on hearing her hand touch the latch of the little garden gate, Captain Mauleverer's tall shape rose in the summer twilight from a little rose-covered garden seat, where he had been waiting for her.

'At last !' he cried, hastening down the alley, and throwing away his cigar as he came.

'Oh ! Godfrey !' she cried, 'come in. I am not able to stand, I am so tired. Come in with me, dear.' The Captain drew her arm into his, and led her into the little sitting-room. The lamp was lighted. He marked her paleness, and poured out a glass of wine for her. She put his hand aside.

'I am so frightened,' she began breathlessly, 'and I don't know for what. Who do you think I met in Havre. Hyacinth Skerrett and the two girls his sisters going to Homburg for his gout or theirs, I forget which, but it was he told me. I stopped with them all day, talking over old times with Mary and Charlotte. They're my cousins just twice removed ; you remember Matty Skerrett married twice, and the second time it was a cousin of the same name as herself ; the first was a D'Arcy, not the D'Arcys of the Hill, these are D'Arcys of Levalley. Matty had no children.'

Godfrey nodded and began to light a fresh cigar.

'Oh dear !' sighed Miss Juliet. She had exhausted herself in the family ramifications. 'That is not what I've to tell you though. Hyacinth Skerrett came to see me on board, and, indeed, he might not have left his news to the last minute that way. Your Uncle Godfrey Mauleverer of Barrettsdown—I am to write to Father Paul Conroy the parish priest of the place, and a brother of Conroy of Ballinavogue, and indeed there is at least the rinsings of a tub of relationship between that Conroy and the D'Arcys.'

'Juliet, my dear,' observed Godfrey, who was wondering

what there was in all this to distress her, 'I don't know any of these west country people, and I have told you that often enough, I think.' He smoked for a second or two, then observing the wild eyes with which she was staring at him, he resumed :

'Come, let us have your news.'

'But I have told it to you,' she burst out. 'Oh, Godfrey! you don't seem as if you cared one pin, sitting there smoking as if it was nothing at all, and for all we know your uncle may be dead and all his children with him.'

'What?' said Godfrey, 'have they cholera in Barretts-town? or are you telling me one of your dreams again?'

He removed his cigar from his mouth and fixed his great dark eyes on her with a startled look that contradicted his speech. Juliet began to sob with pure exhaustion and exasperation.

'It was just this way, then. We were the last to get on board, and he had barely a minute; his words were these just as I'm telling you now: "Poor Ismay's father and I were boys together"—or friends—he said one or other. "Mauleverer's uncle at Barretts-town is—" and then he had to run to get on shore as the boat was going, so he shouted to me off the wharf: "Write to Father Paul Conroy the parish priest," and told me he was by way a connection of my own, and that he would give me the news—and there must be something, Godfrey.'

Godfrey was silent for a moment. 'My uncle is not above sixty, I don't fancy,' he said, resuming his cigar, 'and he has three sons; one of them must be of age by this; there were two of them at Eton when last I heard of them. Let me see, when was that? fifty-one, or was it fifty-three, eh?' He ruminated a moment. 'Come, Juliet, drink your glass of wine, old woman, and go to bed. You are tired and nervous, and you are excited about those children, and have taken some *fantigue* into your head. Come, it is a day-dream this of yours. Here, drink it, I insist on it.'

Poor Miss D'Arcy drank the glass of wine which God-

frey held to her lips. 'But I tell you, Godfrey,' she insisted. 'There is *something*. There must be. Anyhow,' she said, 'you'll write to Father Paul Conroy, eh? won't you, dear?'

'Tush! yes! I'll see! Have some supper. I bade Amélie have supper for you. I am off. Sir Harry Crshaw's yacht is to start with the next tide—that is to say three in the morning. I should be on board now, only that I waited to see you. I don't know when we'll get back.'

Miss D'Arcy looked at him and burst into a fit of weeping.

'Oh, Godfrey, Godfrey. Will you ever have sense? Will you ever think of doing your duty by these poor lambs? What did you promise me long ago, beside their poor dead mother?'

She tried to rise from her chair but was unable. Godfrey laid his cigar in an ash-tray and walked across the room to her.

'Look here, Juliet,' he said, in a low but most intense tone, 'you are not very complimentary to me, by Jove! Do you imagine, you old goose, that if there was the least thing wrong—the legitimacy of my children ever questionable—that I should not have set it right long ago, eh?—do you? You have taken some nonsensical notion into your head, old lady! There now, good-bye! you are only delaying me.'

The window was open, and the wind, which had risen and was blowing from the east, carried in the sound of the incoming tide breaking on the pebbly strand, not thirty yards from where they were. A sharp whistle was heard. It was the signal from the cutter sent from the yacht.

'Juliet,' said Godfrey, 'they are looking for me. Now, there's a good soul!'

He soothed and stroked her. She ceased to sob, and an expression of almost resigned despair came into her face.

'I must go—I cannot stay.'

'Don't,'—she had risen from her chair and caught his sleeve as he was leaving the room.

'One word! Godfrey, dear,' she pleaded, 'one word. Tell me the name at least of the place you and Ismay were married in.'

'I must go; they are looking for me,' he cried impatiently; 'don't you hear the wind rising? We shall not be able to get out if I don't go. Aird's West, the Royal Stag. Aird's West, then, since you must, Ju! It was irregular—no clergyman, you know, and that! I'm gone! good-bye!'

The door shut almost simultaneously, and Juliet was left alone. The sound of the sea seemed to grow louder and louder, and the little casement, which had been open all day, shut with a sudden clap which startled her. Then it flew open again just as suddenly, and she heard the order, 'Give way,' in Godfrey's voice, as the wind carried it to her. The yachtsmen were in waiting on the beach just at the foot of the garden, and the breeze carried the voices to her. Then she could hear the measured beat of the oars, for an instant only, and all was silent again save for the rising storm and tide.

Amélie the *bonne* came in now with some food, but failed to induce her mistress to touch it, and finally retired, thinking there had been a scene—nothing uncommon in the household. Madame, being quick and expansive, was given to extremes of word and act, while Monsieur, if indulgent and amiable, was decidedly provoking.

Tired as Miss D'Arcy was, she could not retire to rest until she had taken action in some way upon the information given her by her friend of the afternoon; so she seated herself at her desk, and began a letter to Father Paul Conroy of Barrettstown. Exhausted and stupefied as she was by the excitement she had undergone, she retained grasp sufficient of her intellect to arrange the points of her letter with characteristic diplomacy, and to present them in the proper order to the mind of the person whose interest she desired to gain.

The D'Arcys were ancient stock. The name of a County Clare D'Arcy, as Miss Juliet was in the habit of saying, carried weight with every one who knew anything, and a cousin,

a female D'Arcy, had once married a Chadwick. 'Yes,' mused the letter-writer, 'Marion D'Arcy's daughter by that Chadwick man was the mother of Father Paul Conroy. I'll put that first, yes, he will take an interest after that in doing me an obligation just like one of our own,' thought the astute princess of the Clan D'Arcy. Accordingly she began on the first sheet of thin letter paper she could find, but no sooner had she fixed her eyes on the paper and endeavoured to concentrate her thoughts on wording her ideas, than a burning headache intervened and forced her to resign the task. She recollected also that there was no post now before noon of the following day; so, gladly and reluctantly all at once, she closed her desk and retired to her room—not to bed yet. Tired and in pain as she was, and inviting as her white couch was, Juliet knelt in prayer for a good half-hour before her little oratory.

The next day, refreshed and more at ease, Miss D'Arcy's industry was rewarded by a very satisfactory result, in the shape of the following letter written in the fine antique Italian hand which yet survives in Ireland, and which a good hour before the mail closed she had finished, and was reading and re-reading with great pleasure to herself:—

'REVEREND AND DEAR SIR—The matter of this letter must be my apology, feeling as I do that no personal excuse that I could bring forward would suffice for venturing to intrude upon you. May I be permitted by way of preamble to recall to you that there exists in a considerable degree a relationship between ourselves? Your maternal grandmother was a full cousin once removed of myself, who have the honour of addressing you. I allude to Miss Marion D'Arcy, who married one James Chadwick, the grandmother of yourself and your esteemed brother, Mr. Phelim Conroy of Ballinavogue, close to my late father's place, Sheepstown. I mention this circumstance in the full conviction that it will have the effect I wish, namely, to interest you as a relative in the business which I have at heart in writing to you, and which is nothing less than a family concern of the highest importance.

'I will now proceed to lay it before you. My late niece—God have mercy on her—Ismay D'Arcy, being at that time seventeen years of age, married and ran away with the nephew' (Juliet reversed purposely the order of things) 'and namesake of Mr. Godfrey Mauleverer in your parish. Captain Mauleverer has been on bad terms with his uncle. Indeed there has never been at any time any communication between them. I know that old Godfrey Mauleverer is married and has five children, three of them being sons, but if it had been otherwise, or if these sons were to die before him, my niece's husband is the next-of-kin, the estates being entailed. It is in his interest and that of his three children that I venture to act upon a suggestion made to me recently by a friend, that I should write to you and ask for information concerning his unknown family at Barrettsdown.

'Only that I fear to trespass too long upon your time and patience, I would enter into the circumstances under which the suggestion was made, and the reason why it has made me so anxious to obtain this intelligence. I have been abroad now for nearly nine years; almost all my immediate friends have departed this world; there is no one to whom I could apply in this matter with such confidence and surety as to yourself, who, living upon the spot, can tell me without difficulty or trouble the exact present circumstances of our relative's family. By doing so at your earliest convenience you will confer a great favour upon and earn the lasting gratitude and prayers of—Yours most obediently

✠ in J. C.,

JULIET D'ARCY.'

'Blessed Virgin Mother,' murmured Miss D'Arcy, as she folded up the foregoing, 'protect and guide me!'

When she had sealed the letter with the D'Arcy crest—a griffin's head and one claw—she carried it herself to the post, judiciously reserving it till one minute before the expiration of the stated time of collection, in order to baffle the curiosity of the post people, of whom she entertained suspicions, grounded on her experience of the

officials of her native district, as, for that matter, she did of all the world outside the Clan D'Arcy.

Her letter gone, Miss D'Arcy gave herself up to a state of pious and resigned, as she thought, but in reality extremely fidgety, anxiety. Godfrey sent word by a fisherman that he would not be back for a good week, which, experience told her, might mean a fortnight. She did not know how long it would take for her letter to go to Barrettstown, Co. Cork; the people at the post-office could have told her at once, but she would die rather than question them. A week passed thus, and she began to despair. The fact was that Father Conroy had gone to Dublin the very morning of the day on which her letter arrived, passing that precious missive on his way. He was a witness in a will case, and as he intended to return from town next day at latest, he desired his housekeeper not to forward anything to him. He was delayed in Dublin for nearly a week after his arrival there. When he at last got home and read Miss D'Arcy's letter he found news indeed to send her, and of so serious a nature that he thought it best to telegraph it. But he might as well have written. The day before his despatch arrived Miss D'Arcy had been summoned in all haste to Portsmouth. The yacht had put in there in search of medical aid for Captain Mauleverer, who was ill of a malignant fever. Ten days later she returned to the cottage bringing with her all that remained of Godfrey sealed up in a leaden coffin. He had always said that, no matter where he died, he wished to be buried beside Ismay. Juliet received her telegram at the hands of the weeping Amélie, and the letter which had followed it by the next post. The telegram announced the death, more than a fortnight before, of Godfrey Mauleverer of Barrettstown. The letter gave details of his last illness which was consequent upon the shock received from the death of his son, the last child left of five who had been spared to adolescence. Father Paul Conroy added that he waited her instructions, and asked her to telegraph, and desire her man of business to enter the children's claim if there were a boy among them. But Juliet D'Arcy was

unable to do so : she was ill—body and mind had given way under the strain of the last few weeks. Godfrey's friends took charge of the burial arrangements ; and it was not for nearly a month afterwards, and then in defiance of doctor and nurse, that she rose, white-haired and suddenly aged, from her bed of suffering.

Driven by an impulse she could not withstand, she collected with feverish energy and packed all that was portable of the family goods, and taking the three children with her, set off—home. 'Home' was the only answer she vouchsafed to the children's questions, and this was given with a tone and look which silenced, if it did not content, them.

CHAPTER III

'Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream,
The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council, and the state of man
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.'

FATHER PAUL CONROY—that person of whom Miss Juliet D'Arcy remarked that there existed the rinsings of a tub of relationship between him and her own august family, and to whom she confessed 'a considerable degree' of the same magic tie, was taking the air calmly in the front garden of his presbytery of Barrettstown. It was about three o'clock of a lovely September day. Dinner was over, and Father Paul, sauntering among his flower-beds, full of overgrown mignonette and a rare luxuriance of nasturtiums, drew now and again a long sigh of pleased acquiescence in the various beauties that lay about him, all of which he appreciated naturally, and with no view to future literary use. He did not even describe them in his own thoughts to himself. The wide view across the Barrettwater, over the bog to the blue heights of the mountains that shut in the Shannon; the autumn glories of the woods to his right and left, and behind the bran new church and presbytery; the balmy scented air through which the gossamers were floating; the scent of the full-blown clove-pinks which had tumbled over the box-edges and sprawled at his feet; the dreamy buzz of the bees, working as for dear life in the

mignonette, scuffling up and down the stems and saluting each other with an impatient *crescendo*, more zealous than civil—it was all grateful and pleasant, and Father Paul thought what excellent potatoes he had had for dinner, and hoped in his heart that all and every one of his parishioners had as good to dig that very day.

Miss D'Arcy's relative was a very tall, burly-figured old man; his massive head, thickly covered with dark gray hair, was slightly stooped, but although he was sixty-five or thereabouts, there were few other signs of age about him. He was as active and strong as most men of half his years, and his rugged homely countenance, which was never shaved oftener than three times a week, if not beautiful, was kindly and amiable in the extreme. He was going to the chapel shortly, to hear confessions, so wore his camlet cassock, buttoned up all crookedly and well trimmed with snuff. A newspaper, which he had been reading, was crumpled up under one arm. His reverence was looking in an absent kind of way about him when a step sounded on the road which ran in front of his house. He raised his head and saw a farmer from the mountain district passing homewards.

'Fine day, Doyle,' said his reverence, with a tremendous chest voice.

'Ay, so, your reverence,' replied the passer-by, taking off his hat.

'Are you getting in your oats, above there?'

'Fait', then, your reverence, we are at the turf yet. You see it got no drying with us till now.'

'Don't lose this weather, Doyle; it won't last. Have you a paper going home with you?'

'I have, sir; the Carlists are defeated again, I see.'

'Indeed, yes. I see that.'

The wayfarer took off his hat again and passed out of sight along the Dublin Road, which was nearly a foot deep in dust. Father Paul straightened the prop of a bunch of carnations, and turned to saunter into the Chapel House. A rapid step, and almost simultaneously the click of the latch, made him look round. It was a servant from the

Barrettstown Arms. Father Paul cast a keen glance at him, and stood perfectly still until the messenger had approached close to him. It was not that he had not observed the excitement and flurry of the Mercury. Long practice had made his reverence a trifle cynical as to such outward signs. He was in the act of taking snuff when the boy got up to him, and, pulling his front hair, began all in one breath—

‘There is a lady after arrived by the down train, your reverence—must see you this minute.’

‘A lady—and who? What sort of—of lady?’

‘An owld wan, your reverence, and three children wid her, and has a lot of luggage.’

Father Paul’s deep-set eyes kindled, and he started.

‘Miss—Miss——!’ broke from his lips.

‘Miss D’Arcy, your reverence,’ supplied the messenger, ‘and bid me to say she wanted to see you immediately, sir.’

‘You ignorant scoundrel, how dare you, sir, not give your message properly at first, you common runagate—you! You are unfit to feed a pig! Who presumed to send you to give me a message from a lady? Begone out of my sight.’

The final recommendation was quite unnecessary. Father Paul’s voice was enough to frighten an army, and the messenger was running off much faster than he had come. The last vibration had little more than died away upon the air, when his reverence, having exchanged the rusty cassock for his best Sunday coat, and surmounted his massive grizzled head with a chimney-pot hat of immense height, was striding off towards the village with his longest steps.

The hotel, towards which the parish priest was hastening, was the largest building in Barrettstown, and occupied a good share of the main street of the town. It was a low, rambling, two-storied building with dilapidated jalousies to the windows, a porch with wooden benches and some seats under a row of well-grown chestnuts, which, with a low parapet that guarded the river bank, gave it an odd, almost foreign look. In the old posting days it had been a

prosperous and busy hostelry. The great mass of stables and outhouses now in ruins bore witness to a time of activity and custom of which nothing else remained. The place seemed now all asleep and half-abandoned. A one-horse car in dry weather, and a fearful old omnibus in wet, attended the up and down trains, which called at a station four miles distant from the town. To save labour, the wretched animal stood in the shafts all day long. It was not worth while to unharness him for the couple of hours between those excursions.

Now and again during the day the Barrettstown Arms showed signs of life. When visitors arrived, which was seldom, a small crowd usually collected to inspect their luggage and themselves when opportunity offered. After bank hours, the officials were usually to be found in the porch, one or two generally boarding in the hotel. When the Dublin newspapers arrived, late in the afternoon, there were always a select three or four politicians and the local letter-writer to welcome their advent. The bar and the coffee-room were seldom untenanted after three—the rest of the house was a wilderness, a great empty spider's web spread in vain.

The advent of an old lady and three children with a huge quantity of luggage, with the addition of authentic reports in circulation of a couple of cartloads lying at the railway station, could not fail to attract a throng of the curious. The leading beggars, 'Lord Cork,' and Andy and his wife Peggy, were grouped to advantage outside the porch, which was occupied by idlers of a higher social position, all talking over the novelty so busily that they never saw Father Paul Conroy's approach.

Some of the bolder spirits had even penetrated into the hall, and were busy twisting their necks to read the labels on the battered portmanteaus and dilapidated trunks that lay piled in a heap quite distinct from the bagmen's cases, when a gruff and resonant—

'Hoh! Mrs. Fagan!' routed the inquisitors like a bomb-shell, and sent them all shuffling apologetically backwards, where they met the external pack crowding inward, all agape to see what would happen next.

Mrs. Fagan appeared without an instant's delay and curtsied for answer.

'Miss D'Arcy here?'

'Yes, father, this way, sir.' She moved as if to lead the way upstairs.

'TAKE UP MY CARD!' ordered his reverence, in a manner that made itself heard and felt all down the street. Mrs. Fagan received the card reverentially, carried it off, and returned without loss of time to show Father Conroy up. He at once removed his hat, and carrying it in one hand, followed the landlady. Not a single voice among the crowd interrupted the creaking of the staircase under his reverence's ponderous tread.

'Madam, I am glad and proud to have this opportunity of making your acquaintance.'

Father Paul had prepared this speech as he followed Mrs. Fagan up the staircase, and he said it in the most mechanical manner the instant that he heard the door close behind him, and almost before he realised the presence of the personage before him.

Perhaps, had he not provided himself with a ready-made formula wherewith to open the proceedings, the worthy father would have found himself quite tongue-tied from astonishment, — the unusualness of the apparition before him being of itself quite startling and unexpected, while the manner of the queer little wild-eyed old woman, which was strained and artificial in the last degree, only added to his amazement.

Miss D'Arcy, with a somewhat eccentric idea of impressing her relative, had attired herself in a long-tailed black silk gown, quaint of design and make. Yellow antique lace made a framing for an anxious drawn face, the colour of which was even a more pronounced yellow, a high aquiline nose, arched black brows, and brilliant wide-opened eyes of the same colour, which snowy white hair, brushed back over a roll, only made all the more startling for the contrast. Two dull-red spots burned in each of Juliet D'Arcy's cheeks, and the hand with which she indicated a chair to her visitor was like that of a fever patient.

'I have to thank you for your telegram, sir.' She spoke with a queer premeditated foreign accent, as designed as her attire. 'It was most kind, most friendly, but I could not avail myself of it—a sad affliction had called me from home. Those children of whom I wrote to you—are now orphans.'

Father Paul, who was indeed impressed to the verge of stupefaction, never taking his eyes off her, uttered a sympathetic groan.

'Their father, my nephew, the husband of my poor niece, Ismay D'Arcy *that was*, Mrs. Mauleverer, died suddenly.'

'I understand, madam, by your letter of the—eh! ah, well! the date's of secondary importance—that by the death of Godfrey Mauleverer without direct heir, your nephew—the estates being entailed—succeeds.'

'Certainly, it is so.'

'And your nephew, Captain Mauleverer, the heir in question, has been removed by death, and suddenly, you tell me, since his uncle's death.'

Miss D'Arcy put a lace-edged handkerchief to her eyes in token of assent. She was not crying—she had not been able to shed a single tear since Godfrey's death. It seemed as if a raging fire were consuming her: her eyes felt as if they were filled with hot sand.

'Then,' said Father Paul, 'his son, if he has left a son, inherits——'

Miss D'Arcy rose suddenly and opened a door leading to an inner apartment.

'Come!' she said imperiously. Godfrey walked in first, followed by the two girls. He was a strikingly beautiful child. His thick black curls clustered round a white forehead, the aristocratic features and bearing which marked him, and the belted blouse, of quaint half-French fashion, and untanned leather boots, all contributed together to bewitch the old priest. Father Conroy could hardly remove his eyes from the living answer to his question. Speech he found none. He drew the little fellow, who was far more self-possessed than he, to him. No child was afraid of Father Paul.

The dirtiest baby of the river-side cabin population left its mud pie on his approach and fearlessly thrust its grubby paw in his hand, or laid hold of the long tails of his rusty coat. It was on record in Barrettstown that a woman who found occasion to beat her four-year-old boy was threatened by him with Father Paul's vengeance, and that the urchin actually did set off, roaring, to the Chapel House, to make good his threat.

Godfrey, having taken a good survey of his new friend's features, leaned against his knee and turned his back to him. His sisters now engaged Father Paul's attention. The twelve-years-old Marion made a reverence, as her *bonne*, now left behind in Jersey, had taught her. She was a tall swarthy-looking child with promise of great beauty in her yet unformed features and lustrous thoughtful eyes; the youngest, Gertrude, hung in her grand-aunt's skirts, and peeped shyly at him. She was speedily transferred to his knee.

'Yes,' said Miss D'Arcy, with a sigh that seemed to come from the depths of her heart, 'that is Godfrey's son. I have his picture. You will see, reverend father, how strong the resemblance is.'

Father Paul ceased stroking Gertrude's curls.

'I attended the old man in his last illness. You are aware perhaps, madam, that he left the Church thirty years ago. Yes, Mauleverer "turned" with his wife, who was an English Protestant. He made a death-bed repentance, a sincere if tardy one, poor fellow—God rest his soul. He spoke to me of his successor and sa—'

'Go! children,' interrupted Miss D'Arcy hastily. 'Marion, take Gertrude. I beg your pardon, father?'

'*Viens donc*,' said the little girl, taking her sister's hand.

'They speak French?' murmured Father Paul, completely awestruck.

'Oh yes, it is the same to them as English,' she replied. A wan smile lighted up her face for a second as she watched the admiring look with which he followed them out of the door. It faded away, and it was with an intensified nervousness that she said to him—

‘You were saying——?’

‘He did not know that his nephew was a married man?’ Father Paul said directly.

For more than a week that question—for to her it was a question, though poor Father Paul intended but a simple assertion—had been sounding in Juliet D’Arcy’s ears. Prepared and ready as she was, it seemed to her as if some cruel cold hand had seized her heart and was squeezing it remorselessly.

‘There was for thirty years no communication between Godfrey and his uncle,’ she replied, with an effort.

Father Paul was gazing straight before him into the cut-paper decorations of the grate. He was remarking to himself—rather tritely—that the ways of Providence were truly dark and mysterious, and specially thinking with reference to the same, of the downfall close at hand for young Tighe O’Malley, the assumed heir-at-law of Barretts-town, who had just begun to throne it in the great house. Father Paul sat silent for an instant, then turned his eyes to Miss D’Arcy, waiting for her to speak. She clasped her hands together, to still their nervous movement, and after an effort said :

‘Father Conroy, it was not to tell you this alone that I sent for you here to-day. I—I am sorely in need of your help and advice!’

Juliet was speaking now with her own natural voice and with a vastly different manner; all her imposingness and foreign dignity and accent had gone together. West Clare was the common tongue of both, and the familiar accents stirred more than one fibre of sympathy in Father Paul Conroy.

‘Eh, well now, dear child,’ he said kindly, falling at once into his confessional manner, ‘sure I am here to help you, and for God’s sake, and old times’ sake, willing, and please God able, to do that same, and now go on and tell me.’

The lonely overtaxed old woman felt as if a door had opened to her at last, giving at least a glimpse of a state beyond all trouble, and she began her story at the beginning.

‘The creature was young, desolate, and may be foolish,

and those D'Arcy Totnams treated her badly. Oh, no doubt of that, however, they—they ran off, and there was a Scotch marriage. I have it all,' she added quickly, in response to his frown, 'and all about it from the poor fellow, the night he went off in that ill-fated way. I don't know what it was, something came over me; I had met old friends who gave me news of his people and bid me write to you, and I was reeling as if something was to happen, so before he went I attacked Godfrey—it was the last time I ever heard him speak. When I got to him at Portsmouth he was out of his mind. Oh! why did I neglect to make him go down to Scotland and get the proofs and see the people? Oh, Ismay, Ismay!' she cried, wringing her hands, 'will you ever forgive me?'

'It will stand,' said Father Paul hastily, 'in law it will stand. Of course the witnesses can be found. The first thing is, though, to inform Mr. O'Malley. Your best plan is to see him and state your case to him and to a lawyer also. I wonder now—excuse me, Miss D'Arcy—why did you not communicate with young O'Malley through your lawyer first?'

Juliet put her hands to her head and pressed it with a dazed look.

'I'll tell you then, father. I was left by myself, and then that Hyacinth Skerrett put you in my head. The one thought I had since ever the poor fellow died was to make straight for this place. Anyhow, is it not where we have a right to be? Surely it is not you, a blood-relation of our own, that will say to me it is not the place for Godfrey's children?'

'Humph! humph! right—right, may be!' He ruminated for one moment. Then, pulling out his watch, he said, 'I should have been in the chapel this half-hour, Miss D'Arcy. However, it seems to me in the interests of all parties the sooner this business is got over the better. I will send a note to Mr. O'Malley to-night, giving him a—a—well, a hint of affairs, and ask him just to come down to see you at once, at his convenience, that is. Well, eh?'—a prolonged inarticulate murmur, expressive of deep considera-

tion issued from Father Paul's lips. 'Not here,' he added after a pause, 'you had better not have your interview here, for many reasons. Madam, my house, if you will honour me, is at your service. Mr. O'Malley will see you there.'

He rose now, and as he finished speaking held out his hand to the forlorn old creature. She took it gratefully and simply as it was offered, forgetting her studied part altogether. A smile lighted up Father Paul's face, and a late sunbeam stole in at the window just in time to meet it, and to gild his two-days-old stubble of beard, investing his homely, kindly countenance with a sort of beatified look. Bewildered as poor Juliet was, she saw this, and became infected by it as by some happy omen. The hard, drawn face relaxed for an instant; she seemed to feel a sense of rest or tranquillity, almost ease—the first for a long time. But the old priest had no sooner left her than the cloud once more overshadowed her. The old sense of solitude and uprootedness was upon her again. The almost maniacal look of anxious tension returned to her eyes, she paced up and down the room until her limbs refused to carry her, then threw herself on her knees and prayed with a perfect agony of supplication.

Father Conroy sent a note to Mr. Tighe O'Malley that evening, requesting him to call at Chapel House the following day at ten in the morning. Mr. O'Malley was absent with a shooting-party, and did not return until late at night, and Father Conroy's note, which the young gentleman suspected to be concerning some manorial business, was left to the very last. However, it got its turn in the course of time, and a perusal of the very first couple of lines caused him to drop his cigar contemptuously with a lively execration upon the breakfast-table. Then he burst into a laugh, dropped the letter upon the table and began to walk up and down upon the hearth-rug.

Father Conroy's 'hint of affairs' had been of the very broadest description. He had, in fact, plainly and candidly informed Mr. Tighe O'Malley that a lady had arrived with three children—one of them a boy—whom she asserted to be the children and heirs of his late cousin Godfrey, who had

survived his uncle's death not more than a fortnight. 'I tell you frankly,' the rev. father added, 'that there is some informality in the marriage, and that in consequence, litigation may be looked for naturally. I think it in the interests of both parties that you should see this lady and hear her statement.'

'What a joke this all is, to be sure!' Mr. O'Malley said aloud, then he stuffed the letter into the pocket of his shooting-coat, and walked over to the window of the breakfast-room and surveyed the scene without, or seemed to, rather, for the frowning brows and compressed lips told rather of internal than of external contemplation. He was a very handsome young fellow, dark enough of complexion to suggest a relationship with the little Godfrey at the inn in the village below. He had the look of one who could, and did, enjoy life. It would be hard for him to turn out, to resign his seven thousand a year, and go back to the meagre two hundred which his father had been able to allow him. Mr. O'Malley's reverie did not last long. He rang the bell with a vigour that brought a servant almost immediately.

'The dog-cart, Brady! in one minute, do you hear? The sooner I get this over me, the better chance I am likely to have with the partridges to-day,' he murmured.

The news had shocked him. His healthy red cheeks had blanched, and as he lifted the litter of papers off the table, and dropped them into an escritoire with a folding lid, his hand shook so much that he noticed it himself. He left the room, and proceeding to the dining-room buffet, poured himself out about three parts of a glass of brandy. Then he pulled on his gloves, selected a whip from a rack in the hall, and took his stand upon the steps to wait for the dog-cart. The brandy had sent the blood circulating a little faster in his brain. Whether caused by the shock or the unwonted stimulant, a slight giddiness came over Tighe O'Malley. The scarlet and yellow of the flower-beds seemed to be blurred together, and the long even vista down the drive between the trunks of the great beeches swam a little before his eyes.

The cool nipping air of the September morning soon restored him to his physical balance at least, and as he cast an appreciative glance round him at the beautiful stretch of park, wood, and water, hill and dale and bog, reaching over to the violet-coloured mountains—of which a break in the wood gave a distant glimpse—all his own, he clutched the whip-handle tightly, and muttered, 'I'll fight, by——; no compromise! All or nothing! I'll see it out, if it costs me twenty years' income.'

The dog-cart came round the drive. He sprang into his seat and the frisky chestnut gave him enough to think about for a little while. Fast as he drove, it was a quarter-past ten when he drew rein at the Chapel House gate. Father Conroy met him at the foot of the steps, his rugged face wearing a troubled puzzled look. He bowed to Mr. O'Malley, who replied to this courtesy by an extremely distant inclination, it having just entered his Irish Evangelical head, that this sudden apparition of a hitherto unexpected heir might be a Popish plot against the Protestant succession in his own person. He set his teeth hard to keep in some ugly words, as he stepped hurriedly into Father Conroy's dining-room. He looked round as he entered the door, with the air of one keen for the fray, but there was no one to be seen. Father Paul closed the door.

'The reason, sir,' he said, 'that I asked you to meet the lady here, instead of at the hotel below, was that, however things turn out, there may be no scandal spread.'

O'Malley bowed again. The tone and look of the old priest almost disarmed his suspicions. He determined, however, to lose no time, so by way of a hint he plucked at his watch chain. His hands were trembling in such a degree that he could not have taken out his watch.

'I—I am rather pressed for time, Father Conroy—I wish to see the lady at once. What does she call herself, may I ask, please?'

'Miss D'Arcy, and she is the grand-aunt of these children. She is an elderly person, and her family and connections are well known to me. We come, in fact, from the same part of the country.'

Father Paul scratched his chin softly, thinking if he ought, in candour, to inform his opponent that he was a relative as well.

'D'Arcy is a well-enough known name,' said O'Malley with an effort; then to himself, 'I wonder how much she has promised him.' Again he shifted his attitude and looked impatient. Father Conroy sighed profoundly, and walked out of the room slowly, leaving the door open as he went. Every second seemed an hour to Tighe O'Malley. He looked at the picture over the chimney-piece without seeing it, took out his watch and never noticed the time it marked, and as he looked up from it found himself face to face with an old lady who presented to him a most surprising and uncommon appearance. His bow was purely automatic. 'What an awful old witch!' was his internal comment. Then he remembered some picture or print which she resembled, with her snowy hair rolled off her face, her wild staring black eyes and hooked nose. Her mouth was twitching in a curious manner, and she seemed to be trying to control an agitation which every fold of her dress proclaimed. Father Paul pushed forward an arm-chair, into which Miss D'Arcy sank in such a way as to make one movement of her acknowledgment of Mr. O'Malley's bow and the act of sitting down. He remained standing.

'Will you not be seated, sir?' asked Father Conroy, very gravely.

'Humph! thank you,' replied O'Malley, laying his hand on the back of a chair close to him. 'I understand, madam,' he was beginning in a hoarse voice when Father Conroy lifted his hand.

'Mr. O'Malley, I beg of you, sir—excuse me, Miss D'Arcy—I wish to say that if it is the wish of either party that I should retire, I am ready to obey you?'

Juliet D'Arcy turned towards him with an imploring look. 'Don't leave me, I beg of you, sir. As I told you, I am alone, utterly alone. I implore of you to stand by me.'

'Mr. O'Malley will do you every justice, madam, I will answer for it;' and he turned to O'Malley, 'I repeat to you, I know this lady.'

'You have sent for me, madam,' broke in Tighe, forcing himself to speak slowly,—he was kind-hearted and generous, and he felt a sudden sense of the inequality of the contest between himself and the quaint little old figure in the chair,—'to put in a claim as next-of-kin—I mean on behalf of an heir to the estate I am in possession of. You speak of a son of my cousin, Godfrey Mauleverer?'

'Yes,' replied Miss D'Arcy, 'that is so. The boy is in the next room—Godfrey. His father married, nearly thirteen years ago, my niece Ismay D'Arcy. Mrs. Mauleverer died nearly nine years back.' Juliet fixed her eyes on him, seeing him but vaguely. She was rocking herself to and fro over her clasped hands, repeating to herself, 'Nine years that I wasted, nine years that I allowed to go by. Ismay, Ismay, oh! Ismay!'

O'Malley stepped forward. All the blood in his body rushed into his face. The veins on his forehead swelled with wrath.

'Married thirteen years ago, died nine years ago, in Heaven's name do you think such a tale as this will hold water? Do you imagine it likely if Godfrey Mauleverer married any woman of respectable character that his kinsfolk would not have been informed of it? I put it to you, Father Conroy. Where was this marriage? Who was the girl? Why, my uncle buried his last child only four months ago. He knew well that this estate was entailed and was Godfrey Mauleverer's. I never dreamed of inheriting until I heard of his death at Portsmouth. The solicitors, of course, had written to inquire for him at once, and inform him of his succession. Then they telegraphed to me and told me he had been taken ill yachting with Sir Harry Crashaw. I was next, naturally, if my cousin was what we always supposed—an unmarried man.'

He was wiping his lips now, and leaning against the chimney-piece. Father Conroy sat opposite, grave and silent, but watching both combatants closely.

'He was a married man—married thirteen years ago,' said Miss D'Arcy, but no one heard her. Her dry lips only framed the words to herself.

'It's all nonsense,' went on O'Malley, 'all nonsense, a delusion or imposition.' Miss D'Arcy started up trembling violently.

'No! no!' she cried, with a harsh scream. 'God's truth, and I will prove it. Ismay was married, was poor Godfrey's wife, and I have his own words for it. The children are all right.'

'Prove it! I defy you to prove it! I call you to witness, Father Conroy, whether you are accessory to this or not, I'll fight it out to the last—no compromise. To say that here—my uncle not two months dead, every one in the full belief I was only enjoying my own right—these creatures start up out of the ground and pretend to oust me! I've heard of such impositions before; palm off some brat, indeed. An estate of seven thousand a year is not to be had so cheap as all that, madam!' He stopped speechless, for want of breath. Great drops of perspiration rolled down his face. Miss D'Arcy, who seemed to have grown more calm in inverse ratio to his excitement, was beginning to speak when Father Conroy's voice drowned hers.

'Surely, Mr. O'Malley, this is not necessary; my dear sir, I—I—Miss D'Arcy says there was a marriage. Surely she knows well enough: she cannot expect us to rest satisfied with her mere allegation of the fact. Proofs must be shown.'

'I can prove it,' gasped Miss D'Arcy. Her eyes were blazing with an unnatural lustre, and her hands shook.

'Prove it, then,' almost shouted O'Malley, 'prove it, I say! Where are the marriage lines, eh? Have you that to show me?'

Miss D'Arcy pressed her hands on her breast.

'No! no! Merciful God! No!'

'No!' echoed Tighe, 'no! What is the meaning of this, Father Conroy?'

'Gently, my good sir, all in good time: that may be as Miss D'Arcy says; do not agitate her. Calm yourself, Miss D'Arcy, I beg. Sit down.'

Father Conroy was frightened by the look that had come over Miss D'Arcy's face. It was as if some awful Medusa

vision had passed before her eyes, which were fixed and staring in a way terrible to see.

'When were they married? Where did the ceremony take place?' asked Father Conroy gently. 'The place and church are as good as a certificate.'

'Yes,' repeated O'Malley, 'the place! The church, the name of the place?'

'I HAVE FORGOTTEN IT. HE TOLD ME: I HAVE FORGOTTEN!' and, with an agonised shriek, she fell to the ground in a fit.

CHAPTER IV

'I have not stood long on the strand of life,
And these salt waters have had scarcely time
To creep so high up as to wet my feet ;
I cannot judge these tides—I shall, perhaps,
A woman's always younger than a man
At equal years, because she is disallowed
Maturing by the out-door sun and air.'

MARION fed the rabbits with the leaves of the cabbage, and then, moved by the plaints of the goat, pushed the cabbage-stump through a hole in the door into her place of durance, and turned to go into the house, with some vague idea, bred of old school habits, of doing something.

Her schooldays were over. She had been easily first of the first class for some three years, and as for the last two her school-work had consisted of going over and over the same elementary lesson-books, turning back faithfully from the end to the beginning, until she knew their contents by rote, Father Paul had thought it well that she should consider herself 'done school.' Marion had been awarded so many first prizes that her reverend relative, amiable always, decided that she overshadowed everybody else, and that the other pupils should be given a fair chance. He insisted upon her taking lessons by herself, partly with a view to her further improvement, but, if truth be told, with an eye to distinction as well, for Father Paul was most excessively proud of one and all of the Mauleverer children. Marion now found time hang heavily on her hands. She went, like all the other girls of the town, to eight o'clock mass

every morning. After breakfast the old habit of going to school, with its attendant bustle and excitement, asserted itself, and left a sort of periodical fit of energy that had to be dissipated somehow or other, and which expended itself in fits of vicarious piano-practice, writing Italian exercises, or reading over the stanza or two of 'Jerusalem Delivered' for the old nun who gave her an Italian lesson twice a week.

What was it all for? What was the use? she asked herself. Now after ten minutes of Brinley Richards, she jumped up, and picking up a garden hat, ran downstairs, intending to go and see the nest in the stone-pine. As she passed the door of Miss D'Arcy's room, the sound of Kitty Macan's voice came out.

'Deed then I think that girl of Ahearne's must be mad, so I do! It is extraordinary, what notions de kind of girls dat's goin' nowadays has.'

There was nothing so new or interesting in this discourse as to tempt Marion to play the eavesdropper. So she ran lightly over the tell-tale boards of the hall, the door was half open, and passed out and stood on the steps.

There was a carriage-sweep before the door. The entrance to this faced the river and lay to her right hand. There were wide gates of rusty iron with great stone piers, surmounted by balls of granite all grown over by a pale golden-green lichen like that on the trunks of the chestnuts, which grew beside them. These gates were always shut, as evidenced by a fresh growth of weeds all about them, but a wooden door in the wall close by stood perpetually ajar. The paint of this had once been green, but was now blue, and an enormous growth of ivy overhung it, and so completely hid everything that the doorway looked like a passage cut through this. Godfrey had promised for long enough to trim it, or make Rody the boy of all work do it.

Father Conroy's tall hat—his hat of ceremony, which he wore only when visiting Miss D'Arcy, or the mother superior of the convent—was daily rubbed and frayed in its passage through. However, Godfrey had always so many alternative schemes and plans for the doing of it that

somehow it never was done—one of these plans being to borrow a shears from some one and do it himself, another to get a wood-ranger from Barrettstown demesne on the other side of the river to do it, another to order Kitty Macan's runner Rody to mend the ladder, and borrow a shears and do it carefully. And so it came about that the ivy flourished, at its own will, and the Portugal laurels and cherry-laurels that clustered round the one tall stone-pine trailed their over-luxuriant branches on the ground unheeded and uncared, save by the birds that held their trysting-place among them.

Marion liked the great ivy toddlers, and never urged Godfrey to their destruction. They hid the house so thoroughly, although indeed it hardly required any adventitious aids in that respect. The river-road was hardly ever used. It had formerly, as well as being the thoroughfare to the mill, led up to a place called the Heron's Farm, but this no longer existed. Tighe O'Malley had taken it up from the occupiers and thrown it into the new plantations near the heronry. Hardly any one passed that way now; and the road, which had been, in the old times when the mill was working, a well-frequented thoroughfare, had become a mere grass-grown cart-track. The Limerick Road, which ran along by the other side of the osier field, took all the people. Even the turf-cutters preferred it, although it was a little longer for them, in going to and fro from the bog.

She passed through the door under the ivy-thicket, and out on to the green pathway. A little way up was the weir, and beside it the mill-race, cut through an elbow of the bank, and down which the water ran noisily still, though long years had passed since it had turned the mill-wheel.

A double row of flowering currant-bushes, all in blossom and filling the air with their aromatic smell, ran parallel to the race, and under the branches of the currants were thick clusters of primroses, double, lavender, white, and the commoner but more beautiful yellow. Marion looked at these, and said half aloud to herself, 'If I chain Nanny here, she will destroy all these flowers, and if I take her farther up or down there is no good grass, and she has

eaten the grass-plot bare in the garden. I wish we had never bought her. Suppose I drive her across into the demesne.'

Marion, who was thinking of the goat, turned her eyes away from her primrose-tufts across the river to the wood of Barrettstown and the tempting reaches of fresh green grass that the vistas among the bare tree stems allowed to be seen. Tufts of daffodils and jonquils dotted these irregularly. The sun shone on the tree stems, and the willows had a most beautiful reddish tinge. The blackbirds were singing and darting in and out of the laurels, and the crows, of whom there seemed to be hundreds, were coming and going in the tops of the pines and beeches. Marion stood a few minutes watching them. The weir ran across the river at this point. The top of it, a wooden bar, was about four inches or so in width. Godfrey had crossed over by it often enough, and the goat, unless securely chained, was in the habit of using it for trespassing purposes also. Marion looked once more at her pretty primroses and flowering currant-bushes. Then she returned to the house and reappeared with the goat, which ran out headlong dragging her after it. The creature was hungry, and charged desperately at the very shrubs and flowers its mistress desired to protect. Marion pulled it off by main force, and once more casting an envious look at the opposite side of the river, moved away, keeping up stream, and tugging the unwilling and mischievously-inclined animal after her. When she came abreast of the weir the goat made a plunge to get on the top of it.

'Since you want to, you may, Nan,' said Marion aloud; 'you are really too tiresome,' and she leaned forward to take off the chain from the creature's collar. This required both hands, and she let go the chain. The goat profited by her opportunity and dashed off. One leap brought her on top of the weir. The chain had tangled itself into a lump, and Marion, who had only half unfastened it from the collar, presently had the comfort of seeing it drop off into the river, and that on the downward side of the weir, where the current might be expected to wash it down into the mud.

She stood confounded at the sight of the mischief she had done. There was the goat far off in the wood already, tearing and biting alternately at the grass and the young shoots of the trees and shrubs. Deprived of the weight of the chain, who could tell whither she might not wander, perhaps to the gardens or the pleasure-grounds. What in the world was to be done now? Nanny, rid of the chain, was careering in the woods beyond; Godfrey, and no one else, could help her now.

Away she sped in quest of him. She searched the yard and garden for him in vain. At last from the end of the farthest alley she could espy his black head bent over his writing-table in one of the windows at the top of the house.

She flew to him. 'Oh, Godfrey!' she panted, 'that dreadful goat! she has let the chain fall into the river, and is off through the woods into the demesne.'

Godfrey was writing at a table set in the window, spread with papers and books. He stooped forward over it, and spread his arms on the top of the papers to keep her from looking at them.

'What!' he shouted, 'in Quirke's cabbage-field again! Well, *this* time he shall be paid for them!'

'No, Barrettstown woods! I was taking off the chain to—to——'

'To what?'

'Well, the fact is, she would have destroyed the currant-bushes and the primroses, and she has eaten every bit of grass on the ditch-bank and the garden-plot, and I just thought I would let her go over to the wood.'

'Oh ho! trespass! Well? and who cares about *that*? I thought you came to tell me she had got out into Quirke's cabbage-field. Well, and now, after managing matters so comfortably for her, are you disappointed that Nanny has accepted your invitation and gone to do mischief to our neighbours?'

'The chain, Godfrey! the chain! how are we to do without it? Oh, come down! you are able to stand on the weir, and if you take the garden rake you might easily fish it up again.'

'Easily, might I? Then let me see you do it. Now off you go, Marion, and leave me to my work. Do you hear? How am I to study if I am constantly interrupted in this manner?'

Marion never dreamt of remarking the way in which he spread his arms, to hide the paper at which he had been busy when she entered the room.

'Eh? *mon Dieu!* Godfrey, do! do go and fish up the chain for me. What am I to do without it when she comes in to be milked in the evening?'

'I will, I will; there, there—go! Do you not see how busy I am? Not just now. There is plenty of time before tea.'

She withdrew unwillingly, and he bent his head again over the row of figures on the paper before him. Marion went to her own room, feeling a little uncomfortable about the results of her morning's performance. She too sat down to work in the window. There was a chair with a shawl folded cushion-wise upon it, and a couple of very ancient books lay upon the sill of the window, which was open. Marion took up her *Tasso* and conned half a stanza. The task consisted of four, and one she knew already. She was not to have a lesson until the next day, so there was no need to hurry in the preparation. Before long the *Tasso* had fallen on the floor, and Marion was leaning her chin in her hands and staring across the garden into the little space between the trees, through which she could see the blue smoke of Barrettstown, and some of its dusky roof-tops. She was thinking of Mary Ahearne, the farmer's daughter, from Castle Lambert, who had been a schoolfellow of hers for something more than four years; and the news which Kitty Macan, notwithstanding her hurry, had amassed and brought back from the town that morning. It was in one sense no news to Marion. She had known that her old schoolfellow was to be married. She knew what the match was, that the parents on both sides had arranged to start the young couple in wedlock, Mary Ahearne having been dowered by her father and mother with so many hundred pounds, and so many cows; and

Harry Capel's parents having agreed on their side to give up the farm and stock to himself and his wife; Mary Ahearne's dowry was to be at once handed over as fortunes to his sisters, so as to settle them in life, and get them out of the bride's way. Marion knew that Mary Ahearne was determined to be a nun, that she was naturally pious, and that she had hated farm life ever since she had become a boarder at the convent. Ever since the beginning of Lent she had expected to hear of the rupture of these negotiations.

'I wonder if Mary Ahearne will give way and consent! Will she refuse Harry Capel? She is too weak and quiet; they will compel her. Poor Mary! I am so sorry for her.'

Just at that moment a pair of sparrows, fighting vigorously for a crumb of bread, flew past her window. She leaned out and watched them until they made up their difference and flew into their nest in the ivy on the wall. But then something else more useful and important appeared. This was Kitty Macan once more dressed for the road and taking her way towards the short cut to the village from the end of the garden.

'Kitty, Kitty, Kitty!' hailed Marion, craning her neck out of the window.

'Well, den?' responded Kitty, turning her face, set in the frame of the velvet bonnet, upwards.

'Wait,' cried Marion. She sat down and wrote hastily on a half sheet of paper the following words—

'MY DEAR HONORA—Will you go with me this afternoon to Lambert's Castle to see Mary Ahearne? I shall leave this at two, and look out for you along the Limerick Road.'

Having signed her name, Marion ran downstairs, twisting up the sheet of paper as she went. 'Now, Kitty, give that into Miss Quin's own hands, you hear—not to any one else.'

'I will, den,' said Kitty, nodding her head; but as she turned to go she added, as if it were an afterthought: 'An' I wonder at you, Miss Mauleverer, so I do now, to be writing to that Quin girl dere, an' she not your equal at

all, miss. I hear your aunt say just now she's 'stonished she not hear you play your music upstairs.'

Marion heard not a word of this; she was playing with Fly, the greyhound, who, hearing his master's step on the stairs, left her and bounded to meet him. Godfrey went into the yard and called Rody to find the rake, so Marion went up to her own room, hoping devoutly that he meant to fish up the chain. After some further vicarious study of her *Tasso* she resumed her piano, but fitfully; then she found her way down to her aunt's room and did some lace work, and before two she was crossing the osier bed with long steps and jumps from one pool to another, until the gap in the dike was reached and the long stretch of the Limerick Road lay before her.

CHAPTER V

'The worthless peasants bargain for their wives,
As market men for oxen, sheep, or horse,
Marriage is a matter of more worth,
Than to be dealt in by attorneyship.'

WHILE Marion Mauleverer, light and graceful as a young fawn, was springing from tuft to stone and from stone to tuft, courting danger, and in the lightness of her heart setting herself to perform feats of leaping on her way across the osier field, the person to whom the twisted-up note had been conveyed was, in obedience to the behests therein expressed, preparing to carry them out.

Miss Honor Quin was one of the most remarkable persons in Barretstown, and certainly one of the most important. She was about twenty years of age, short and rather thick-set of figure, with good features, plenty of blonde hair, and light eyes, which had always an expression of anger in them; whether this was that they were intelligent and bright, or that the eyebrows overhung them too closely, could not be said, but so it was—Honor Quin's eyes had always a spark in them. Stolidity was the leading characteristic of her countenance, which was as yet too youthful to betray those lines which nature, year by year, writes for whoever studies her caligraphy. She was buttoning her gloves, standing on the threshold of her father's shop. Having fastened the last button, she took a comprehensive look all round her, up and down the street, taking in the windows of the bank, the doctor's house, the attorney's. Then she shook out her skirt, and was about

to start when a voice behind called 'Honor!' suddenly. She turned round so suddenly as to bring her into collision with a pile of goods loosely heaped on either side of the door. A couple of dozen tea-kettles all fastened together by a string, which in its turn depended from a nail, clanked noisily on receiving the impact of a long roll of red flannel which had been so carelessly poised on top of a pile of its kind as to tumble over headlong at the merest contact of her shoulder. Bunches of hearth-brushes overhead swung in the breezes that came in as they liked. Strings of onions and sides of bacon, wooden milk-pails and zinc buckets, hid the entire ceiling of the shop, which was much larger and longer than the outside appearance of the building gave any warrant to expect.

It was a corner building. One side of the shop was devoted to the provision trade, and food was bought as well as sold, for barter in its most primitive form constituted a large part of the trade. It was an ill-lighted, ill-aired, and by no means too cleanly or tidily kept place. But if there was none of the meretricious elegance of other places of business, neither was there any of the pretence and sham so lavishly to be found in these emporiums; no gaudy advertisement cards hung in such a manner as to conceal empty spaces on the shelves; no dummy barrels were ranged in the licensed department. The shelves groaned and overflowed with *bona-fide* merchandise. Barrels of American and French flour stood in rows, together with great sticky hogsheads of sugar, in which the earliest fly of spring and the last lingering wasp of autumn found a harvest of refection. There was not a single chair to be seen, but the stout painted counters were in some places worn down at the edges in a manner which showed that customers had the habit of using them instead. There was a well-marked depression at the egg and butter counter, behind which Mrs. Quin habitually sat, and another, only worn considerably deeper, opposite old Peter Quin's post at the desk, where that worthy sat enthroned on high among his books, commanding a full view of the entire domain, his assistants declared, of the back and

front and both sides simultaneously. The one large square window which looked upon the main street contained a heterogeneous medley of paraffin lamps, broom and brush heads, bonnets and hats, rakes and gripe heads, bowls of cabbage and turnip seed, and all sorts of 'dry goods'—an elastic term which includes anything likely to be wanted in the north riding of Cork, from imitation Valenciennes lace down to Black Tartary seed oats.

Honor Quin was about to pick up the bale.

'Don't mind it!' cried the same voice, hastily and peremptorily. 'Tom, pick up that roll for Miss Quin, do ye hear?' continued the speaker, advancing into the light before the door. She was a stoutly-built short woman, who might have been any age from fifty to seventy. Her hair was all put away out of sight in a thick black net of chenille; a red and gray shoulder shawl was pinned neatly over a black dress that had seen some service, and under the hem of this appeared a pair of large black list shoes. She had probably been good-looking after a fashion once upon a time, but the blue had all faded from her eyes, which were now a nondescript muddy gray, and the red of her cheeks had spread itself impartially all over the somewhat heavy face. The prevailing characteristic of this last would seem at the first glance to be good humour and simplicity. But below this lurked an intense power of concentration and a watchfulness which nothing, however trivial, escaped.

The person addressed as Tom, an unwholesome-looking, heavily-built young man, wearing a ragged and shiny frock-coat, stepped from behind a counter, where he was busy making up the variously-coloured candles into parcels of different sizes, replaced the roll, and shuffled back to his place.

'Honor,' said the woman again, 'where are you going?' Her tone was a curious blending of pompousness and something resembling awe. She was rubbing her spectacles as she spoke, and put them on, and held a close scrutiny of her daughter's face while waiting for her answer.

'I told you before, mother, to Lambert's Castle, to see Mary.'

'To see Mary?—well then, don't stay out too long now, Honor; these evenings are not long enough yet.'

Honor was looking at her, and read suspicion through the glasses of the spectacles.

'If it's dark before I come home, mother, Luke Ahearne will see me safe to the door, you know.' With this Miss Quin turned about, and steering her way safely through the encumbered doorway took her road down the street towards the bridge. She passed the hotel, the bank, the post-office, the rival dealer's shop, then 'The Parade,' where the doctor lived, and the lawyer and district surveyor, with one or two others of the same stamp, the insurance agent, and rival bank manager. The houses were precisely the same as the shops, and belonged to that order of architecture to which the Irish genius seems devoted, and which is to be found all over the country and precisely the same everywhere. Perfectly bare walls with disproportionately short gables, built of the cheapest and poorest materials, and plastered over with a sort of stucco selected because of its complete unfitness, the windows stuck in by couples, and usually crookedly, the buildings all seemed, though none of them were forty years built, to be falling into ruin already, and were in their way as mean and squalid and as destitute of every vestige of taste or decoration as the mud cabins on the opposite side of the river. Nature indeed, left to herself, seemed to favour these, and bestowed with a lavish hand a charitable covering to their misery—multi-coloured mosses, graceful-bearded grass, wall-flowers, and the never-failing and cherished house-leek, hid the crumbling thatch with an ever-changing, ever-brilliant coat of embroidery.

At the end of the main street was the bridge—The Bridge, so called, although there was another, higher up towards the demesne gate of Barrettstown Castle. This was the lounging place for most of the idlers and all of the beggars of the town. All the people who came in by

the Limerick Road, which ran westward, and the Dublin Road, which was a continuation of the same and ran eastwards, had either to cross over or to pass one end of the bridge. It commanded a clear and thorough view of the main street, as well as of an exquisite landscape both up and down the river. Upwards there was a straight silvery bit of the Barrettwater, unbroken as far as the upper bridge; there it turned and went winding through the trees and into the demesne. Downwards the view was much wider and more extended. The river ran through a marshy tract with great fields of bulrushes and flags, out of which a heron rose at times, or a sea-gull, and flapped away, visible for miles against the low horizon. From morning until night the low broad walls of the bridge were frequented by the poor of the town. All the men out of work had a chance of picking up an employer on this rendezvous. On Sundays the labourers stood there, spade in hand, waiting to be employed. The beggars—it need not be said that this term was never made use of by them—waited here for the meal-times of their patrons among the townsfolk, and made furtive excursions to their kitchens, returning with the alms, hot or cold, as it chanced, to share and eat it on the bridge. Of beggars there was a small army in Barrettstown; here, as elsewhere in Ireland, begging being the only recognised profession, the only really orthodox and respectable existence. Any other calling was tolerated, but not really acknowledged. Andy and Peggy Lehan were the two seniors, and took precedence of the rest. ‘Lord Cork,’ whose unusual name requires explanation, was a huge creature, over whose shaggy head some fifty winters had passed. He had once travelled to Cork city, some five and thirty or so miles away, and his interminable discourse of the wonders he had beheld there, together with a habit of swearing, earned for him the title by which he was now exclusively known. There was a great deal of envy and spite shown to Lord Cork by the noble brotherhood on account of his travels, for not one of them had ever been ten miles out of Barrettstown in his or her life,

and they resented his superiority, and meanly aspersed the truthfulness of his descriptions and of his adventures.

He was the son of a small farmer who had been driven off the land, and had settled in the lanes of Barretstown to live, as thousands and hundreds of thousands in the other towns of Ireland lived in like circumstances, in abject misery and poverty. He was a patient being, afflicted with an insatiable appetite, and perhaps a little more religious even than the others. It was the fundamental article of his and their scheme of existence that rich people could only prosper in this world and be saved in the next by the exercise of charity, and the shortcomings of the townsfolk in this respect was a never-ceasing wonder to the brotherhood. Peggy Lehan had no more doubt than Lord Cork as to the sanctity of her mission. In fact, being convinced of the same, she insisted upon a more logical and thorough application of its principle. It being the bounden duty of every one to give alms, Peggy claimed her dole with a boldness inspired by a sense of imprescriptible right. She was 'wicked,' that is to say, short-tempered. On one occasion a strange gentleman, either a visitor or traveller, happened to be crossing the bridge and was accosted by her, the most persistent and unpleasant of all the tribe. He refused with a tone and manner which left her so convinced of his determined and inveterate heterodoxy that she at once ceased to importune, and with a glance charged with vindictive disappointment, exploded into prophecy.

'Ye have the face,' she said solemnly, 'of a damned soul!'

A roar of delighted laughter from the stranger greeted this deliverance, and the ragged sibyl to her amazement found herself the possessor of a whole shilling.

Andy, her husband, was a favourite with every one, and but for this Peggy, who was unpopular, would have fared badly. She was, as might be inferred, a serious-minded creature, sour of visage and address, whereas Andy was invariably cheerful and light-hearted, qualities which, it is an unsuspected fact, are even more valuable in the begging profession than any other reputable walk of life. Lord Cork had the largest number of supporters. His special

infirmity, *i.e.* his large appetite, won him the sympathy of the men. One of the stock jokes of the golden youth of Barretts town was to provide an immense mess for the big beggar-man's consumption, and lay bets upon the amount he could achieve. Truth be said, such events were rare and far between. Perpetual hunger glared from poor Lord Cork's eyes, as it did indeed from those of all of his compeers.

Peggy Feelan represented another class of beggars. She was not clad in the ragged uniform of the 'regulars.' She was tidy and cleanly, always wore a fresh white apron, and carried knitting in her hand. She only begged vicariously in the intervals of nursing, for she was the Mrs. Gamp of Barretts town, no wake was complete without her, and she had a perfect talent for prayer. She need not have been so poor in the intervals of employment but for a weakness which is supposed to be proper to her profession. She also was a favourite, especially with the farmers' wives, who employed her on Saturdays to keep places for them at Father Paul's or Father Collins's confessional—they, coming from a distance and having business to transact, were unable to afford time to wait in the ordinary way. She was the better off by a couple of pence for this exercise. Peggy knew everything in town, and was a mine of information upon all subjects. She could read, or was reputed to be able to read, a little, and on Sunday morning when the American letters were given out at the post-office, was in busy request among the country people, who called for their letters when they came to mass.

There were many others, including a couple of fools and several deformed and afflicted people, without counting a flock of half-naked but evidently well-fed children who settled like flies on every newcomer. These last begged for amusement, and in imitation of their elders. They were never hungry. England may be the paradise of animals, but nowhere in the world are children so well treated as in Ireland.

As Honor Quin passed them, the ragged gentry all shifted their attitudes. Peggy and Andy Lehan were sharing a pipe with Lord Cork, and hid it as she approached.

The two first-named were not only pensioners of her mother's, but customers as well. They spent their 'earnings' in Quin's shop, and so one curtsied and the other bowed, with a 'Save you kindly, Miss Quin,' to which she replied, 'And you too, Andy and Peggy,' very woodenly and perfunctorily, and without looking at them. Lord Cork offered no salutation—the rival shopkeeper was his patroness—and merely betrayed his sense of Miss Quin's neighbourhood by drawing back an enormous red foot that was sprawled over the path.

'Well, Andy Lehan,' he observed, as soon as she was out of earshot, 'dat girl isn't much to look at anyhow. She is neither little and handsome, nor big and ugly.'

'You can't have eferyting den, Patsy. She is very well indeed—clean-skinned young girl—to have five tousan' pounds.'

'How much money is dat?' questioned Lord Cork, who had never owned five shillings in his life. 'Five tousan', oh God! Such a fortune! how much would dat be, I wonder? Dat is more dan the bank has, I am sure.'

No one seemed inclined to reply, and Lord Cork speedily forgot his question in the excitement caused by the arrival of the mail from Dublin.

Miss Quin pursued her way along the Limerick Road, looking neither to the right nor left, save when she had to reply to the salutation of some peasant woman carrying in her customary afternoon pail of milk to the town, or with a huge creel of turf strapped on her shoulders. It was a desolate-looking road now that the town was left behind, and that the Limerick Road had turned so that Barrettstown demesne and its rich woods were at her back. Nothing was visible higher than the brambles along the ditches, or here and there a scrog in the boggy fields that skirted the highway. Naked and bare as the place was now, it had once been a far-spreading populous townland. Moss and nettle-grown piles of stone by the roadside showed where houses, at least in the sense of human habitations, had once been, and the ridges of the old potato-gardens were yet to be traced in the grass. The fields, however, were rapidly

going back into bog; coarse sedgy grass and tufts of rushes had invaded and were springing up between the furrows. The ground began to rise now, and when she turned to look back for Marion Mauleverer she could see the slated roofs of the bettermost houses of Barrettstown between the poplars of the river-bank, and around their stems the cabins of the poor dwellers by the river-side, clustered like so many brown toadstools. Miss Quin was not contented with this survey, so she mounted on a bank beside the path. She was approaching a side road from which a view of the approach to the town would be impossible, and she wanted to make sure if Marion Mauleverer, a most unpunctual person, were really behind her or not. The air was as clear and thin as if a shower had just gone by, and the tiny blue spirals of turf-smoke rose up into the air and hung there like gossamer. She could see every inch of the two miles of road was perfectly bare and deserted, and shining white like a great piece of ribbon unrolled.

'She has gone on before me,' said Miss Quin, with a look of discontent, as she turned up the by-road which led to Lambert's Castle. This was a mere cart-track running at right angles to the road and leading up and round a hill. It was difficult walking, consisting of loose stones of divers sizes lying in water, although deep drain-cuttings on both sides of the boreen were carrying down a noisy brawling couple of streams. Something less than half a mile of the cart-track brought Miss Quin suddenly into view of the farm-buildings. The track grew muddier and dirtier at every step. The cows moved up to the ditch-side from the pasture-field and stared at her. A dog leapt out of the half door in the yard gate and set to bark noisily. It was milking-time, and having heard the door open, without more ado every cow put herself in motion and marched up to the yard close behind Miss Quin, one or two uttering a deep low which was promptly answered by their calves penned inside the yard.

The large door was opened now wide enough to admit Miss Quin, and then shut at once in the faces of the expectant kine. Miss Quin found herself in the presence

of Marion Mauleverer and of Mary Ahearne, both of whom kissed her immediately first on one cheek, then on the other.

'You did not wait for me then, Miss Maulever.' Even Miss Quin could not always manage to pronounce Marion's patronymic correctly. It was not often that the name was extended beyond the properly penultimate syllable.

'No, I will tell you how that was, Honor. Kitty Macan's clock is always a couple of hours all wrong, you know, and if I went to ask Aunt Juliet, she would be sure to want to know everything and perhaps stop me altogether, so I just slipped out after dinner. I could not imagine what hour it was, and so I came on here straight.'

Mary Ahearne and Honor Quin had been schoolfellows of hers at the convent in Barrettstown. They were boarders, she a day-scholar. Marion, although considerably the youngest of the trio—she was little over sixteen, while they were about twenty—had left school at the same time. There was nothing wonderful in this. Miss Mauleverer *chassait de race*. Her class-fellows acknowledged her superiority in all things; she was as far beyond them as was the pronunciation of her unusual name. Privileges of all kinds were hers—she might, and did, read poetry by Father Paul's permission, while Mary Ahearne and Honor Quin could not dare to glance at Byron or 'Lalla Rookh.' They never were late for mass, Miss Mauleverer walked in when she chose. Honor Quin's mother, as soon as it reached her ears that Miss Mauleverer was having private lessons, urged Honor to follow her example, but that young lady had sense enough to be aware that she required no such adventitious accomplishments. She had a fortune, and learning was of no use to her, as she told her mother; it would be a useless expense. Honor Quin possessed the best of the six pianos in Barrettstown. She could sing four songs, play six set pieces, had learned French, heraldry, the use of the globes, and many other accomplishments which were already in a fair way to be forgotten, for she despised these as the appanage of dowerless girls. She had three thousand pounds, and a deal more to come after that, as

her mother told her often enough, and she intended to marry a professional man. There was no one in Barretts-town or its environs who was deemed by herself or her parents to possess the equivalent of the fortune which Peter Quin had told Father Paul he could give her, 'money down'—three thousand pounds. The fact was, Peter Quin could give her ten, not three, thousand pounds, 'and never miss it,' but he had no intention whatever of allowing the residents of Barretts-town and North Cork generally to suspect that he had made so much money as that by them. His customers had, however, a shrewd idea that Miss Quin was worth more than the advertised sum—hence Lord Cork's exaggeration. The whole country had been canvassed by the match-makers for a likely suitor for the heiress's hand. Before Lent began half a dozen young farmers, Harry Capel among them, had sent 'messages,' or rather their respective mothers had sent them before Shrove, in their behalf. The ambassadors had all been received and treated in the most cordial and hospitable manner, magnificently even, but their overtures had been respectfully declined. Miss Quin was too young yet, her mother could not think of letting her go from her this year yet. Such were the excuses offered. Little by little it came to be known, or rather felt, in the town, that no one was good enough for Miss Quin. Her brother, the young counsellor that was to be, was looking out for a high connection for her in Dublin, and hereafter and for ever she was unanimously proclaimed to be destitute of the faintest trace of good looks. Honor Quin cared little for this. She had a poor opinion of Barretts-town, and testified the same in a hundred ways. She had as much money as she chose to ask for, and in the matter of clothes, not merely *carte blanche*, but it was expected of her to spend money lavishly. She was very moderate in the use of these privileges, and for that matter displayed a judgment which was creditable, if somewhat unaccountable, selecting plain cloth dresses in preference to the costly velvets and satins which her mother urged on her. Mrs. Quin wondered at her self-denial, misunderstanding her motive. In her opinion any one who could and might

wear silk or satin at others' cost was a fool not to do so. In this, as in other things, however, she gave Honor her way. It was one of Mrs. Quin's favourite boasts that she never 'crossed' Honor since she was born.

'I have my new pigeons to show you,' said Mary, leading the way towards one of the outbuildings. She took hold of the rusty bolt, and, working it with both hands, got it back, not without difficulty. Then she had to lift back the door, which was broken off the hinges.

'Step in here, Miss Maulever. Honor, come till I show you the new pigeons.'

Mary Ahearne's face had brightened a little, and now that she was standing in the shadow of the outhouse, and was not wrinkling up her face to keep the sun out of her eyes, she looked almost pretty. She was pale and freckled, her forehead was disproportionately large, and her features, especially the mouth, irregular. Still she was fairly well-looking. Her face possessed something over and above the shrewdness which was the leading characteristic of Miss Quin's. The eyes were large and dreamy-looking, the expression was pensive and altogether interesting, which last was precisely the quality that Honor Quin's lacked.

'Now,' she said, leading them into a large untidy kind of storehouse full of all sorts of lumber, broken farm-tools, disused harness, etc. She looked about for the pigeons, and not seeing them, was just turning out of the door, calling, 'Judy, Judy!' when a voice hailed her so loudly as to drown her own.

'Miss Mary, Miss Mary! I say, bad cess to yourself, and will you please not let out those turkeys till I get the chickens fed. The old yellow hen will murder them on me. Will you not let them out, I say. Chick! chick!'

All three girls stepped from the outhouse into the yard again, immediately on hearing this appeal. The speaker was a broad-shouldered servant-girl of about twenty, with bare feet and thick red legs showing under a short black petticoat. Over this she wore a cotton jacket which left her arms bare. She was busy emptying a mess of poultry food out of a black caldron into the feeding-pan. She

stirred up the mess with a wooden ladle and scattered it round about. While thus engaged her eye fell on the two visitors, whose presence she had not before suspected.

'Save you kindly, Miss Maulever. Save you, Miss Quin,' she called aloud, with a grin that showed a fine set of teeth and somewhat atoned for a beetle-browed homely face. 'Chick, chick, chickey'—this was to the poultry. 'Saints be about us,' she continued, speaking aloud to herself, but in a lower tone, 'but that Maulever one is shooting up like a young tree! The eyes dat girl have! Lard! Miss Quin dere beside her looks to want all de money she have,'—she muttered this in the intervals of calling the fowl. Her invitation soon collected the whole feathered tribe of the place. A hen with a family of ducklings came in under the broken door of the yard. The ducklings, well-grown and greedy, rushed headlong, after the manner of ducks, with outstretched necks straight through everything, and falling as they went, across to where the steaming mess of potatoes mixed with pollard and butter-milk was being scattered in ladlefuls. Their disconsolate parent stalked after them. They had taken to the water two or three days before, so the world hardly contained any surprises for her. Chickens of all sizes and ages, from the autumn pullet that had laid her first egg to the wee callow thing hatched yesterday, majestic old cocks, their feathers glistening rainbow-hued in the sun, and plump youngsters destined for the pot for not having been born hens, all scuffled and scraped and shoved, one more greedy than another, the game hens taking the opportunity to deliver pecks and kicks *ad libitum* to their favourite enemies, whom the gratification of a fiercer passion for the nonce kept from retaliation.

'What a number there are!' said Marion. The three girls were standing looking on just where they had come out of the outhouse.

'The food is nice and cold, then, to-day for them; you can't go and say, Miss Mary, that I scalded them; and I am tormented trying to boil it, for the pot has got a hole in the bottom you can see daylight through, and the saints

stirred in the news that the
round about the
visitors whose presence

Quinn she said, looking at the
of teeth and a certain look
face. "Chuck said you were
"Sisters be so good as to
self, but in a way, she was
ing up like a cork in the
Miss Quinn said she was
have—their mother was
fowl. Her mother was
tribe of the white man
in under the name of

well-grown and glossy, and he was more than
of ducks, with waterfowl, and he was not only
thing, and falling as they were, and he was
ing mass of peat, and he was left to do
was being scattered in the air, and he was
stalked after them. 'There's a golden afterwards.'
three days before, and he was left to do
prises for him. 'There's a golden afterwards.'
head drooped.

thing hatched, glowing
glistening ran
destined for the golden morning. 'Give the little turkey
scuffled and

That old yellow hen hate anybody
You should bid me kill her some
me one to dinner you don't like—old
I'd love to see him picking the bones of
ould.'

the great iron pot upside down now and then smartly against the ground so as to shake a particle of food to her hungry clients, turning so her greenish-coloured eyes with a vicious look at the visitors.

and lift the pigs' pot, Judy!' called a voice.

know when I will be able to get that old Jeremy Dudden to come up and solder it. I done it up there with a soaped rag, but it nearly put out the fire on me, so it did.'

There was silence now for a minute, only broken by the multitudinous pecking of the hens, the greedy splatter of the ducks' bills, and the querulous plaints of the turkeys from their prison behind the old coach-house door. The sparrows were all collected in the ivy of the ruin from which Ahearne's farm took its name of Lambert's Castle, and were watching until their turn should come to eat the 'bread of the children,' while from the pigsty in a far corner loud sounds, and not of revelry, proceeded.

'Miss Mary avic, you should order me a new pot some day you goes down to the town,' continued the abigail. 'This one only holds barely enough potatoes for the pigs, an' sure you know they must get enough, the cratures, against we be selling them, or they'll do no good; you may believe me, indeed, but pigs and Christians are much alike in the way of food. Ye must give them all dey want or dey'll do no good. Curse ye! take that for yourself; nothin' will serve ye but get into the dish.'

'Don't kick that drake, Judy,' called Mary Ahearne, in a peremptory voice. 'Look at that, Honor,' she added, in a low voice. 'Is she not disgusting? Nothing will improve that girl.'

'Don't I know what is good for them?' roared Judy, in reply. 'He would ait the whole dish if I would let him.'

'Bring out the turkeys' dish now,' ordered her mistress; 'lay it to one side, over there; Miss Maulever, move just a little bit; I want to open this door.' Mary Ahearne pushed back the door and released a flock of turkeys. They marched out, complaining shrewishly. Instead of making directly for her dish of boiled potatoes and meal one hen-turkey attacked a small fowl viciously.

'Go away, you wicked beast,' cried Mary Ahearne, running to the rescue. 'Judy, stop her!'

'They's the wickedest and crulest beasts, Miss Mary. Lave go, you divle!' cried the almoner Judy, dealing the

aggressive turkey a kick that sent it flying into the air. 'I hate turkeys, they's that crule to one another.'

'You should set them an example,' observed her mistress, somewhat drily. 'Where are the pigeons? Mat shut them up in there.'

'Mat is a fool, miss, so he is! Don't he know very well the slates is off dat house at the back, and what had the pigeons to do but go through? Miss Maulever, Miss Quin, 'tis a pity you cannot see the pigeons Harry Capel sent our Miss Ahearne. Nuns they do call them. They're some like magpies, I'm thinkin'. Lard! 'tis a fine thing to be goin' to be married! The divle a wan at all can I get! No one will take pity on me at all.'

Judy's coarse voice ran on unceasingly, with a jibing sound under its surface of good humour. Her young mistress was angry, and as much if not more ashamed than angry. She turned to Miss Mauleverer apologetically and said, 'I *have* to stay here until my mother comes down stairs and see the fowls fed. She cannot be left to do anything. You won't mind, Miss Maulever, will you? or you, Honor? we will go into the old garden afterwards.' She was evidently perturbed, for she sighed heavily when she had finished speaking, and her head drooped.

'We do not mind. What does it matter, Mary?' returned Miss Mauleverer.

'Throw down some food to this side, Judy, do you hear?' ordered Mary Ahearne. 'Give the little turkey some; those old ones are eating it all.'

'Ay so, Miss Mary. That old yellow hen hate anybody to ait a bit only herself. You should bid me kill her some day that you have some one to dinner you don't like—old Capel, now; I would love to see him picking the bones of that old hen, I would.'

Judy turned the great iron pot upside down now and struck the rim smartly against the ground so as to shake out the last particle of food to her hungry clients, turning as she did so her greenish-coloured eyes with a vicious look in them at the visitors.

'Come and lift the pigs' pot, Judy!' called a voice from

within the house. 'Come at once!' Judy vanished promptly, and Mary Ahearne turned round like one who has obtained a long-awaited-for permission to leave. The others set themselves in motion also, and they picked their way carefully across the farmyard to a door on the opposite side. The farmyard was flanked on two sides by buildings, stables, cow-houses, and other out-offices. The living-house had been built by old Ahearne, and was a plastered edifice fronting the farmyard, exactly similar to the houses in Barrettsdown, only much newer. It was not above twenty-five years built, and was far more ruinous-looking than Lambert's Castle itself, one end of which looked into the yard. The plaster was rain-soaked and stained, and the frost had carried away some of it. The woodwork was all shrunk and wanted painting; nevertheless the place looked prosperous, and, after a fashion, comfortable.

'Come along quick, Honor,' urged Mary. 'Let's get out of the way of the pigs' pot. The smell of it always disgusts me so. Just go in, if you please, Miss Maulever; I must close this door after us, else the hens will get in and lay their eggs ahide—they do whenever they get the chance—and then I shall be blamed.'

Marion and Honor obeyed her, and she drew the door to behind her with a look of relief as though she were glad to shut out the sights and sounds of the farmyard.

They were now in a wilderness that had once been the pleasure-grounds of a gentleman's house, though, save for the trees which remained as landmarks, no one could have thought it had ever been under any kind of cultivation. The walks and alleys had disappeared long ago; the box and myrtle had grown up into trees, and in the shade of the old laurels and ornamental shrubs, rank grass and weeds were flourishing. The three girls made their way through this thicket, which in truth had a very mouldering fungus-like odour, towards an open in the centre. This had been cleared and planted with potatoes. The blackish mould, which had been only recently dug up, smelled fresh and pleasant. A plot of cabbages skirted a dilapidated lavender

hedge on which some articles of linen were bleaching. Other plots here and there had been nearly dug over for the spring planting. Blue periwinkle ran through the grass and clustered about the stems of the shrubs, and a few old rose bushes were discernible here and there. They walked on, following Mary Ahearne's guidance, keeping to the right and towards the old house. They had to make a detour to avoid the ruins of a conservatory, which had been placed in a fine south aspect against the yard wall. It had all fallen in long ago. A metal basin in the centre of a heap of rubbish showed where a fountain had once been. They were not long in picking their way through the pleasure-ground, and soon found themselves at the front of the ruined Lambert's Castle. There was very little indeed that resembled a castle—a front formed of a huge mass of masonry, with a flat parapet on top of the very same style of architecture as Quin's shop in Barrettstown, or the new farmhouse built in the old stable-yard at the back. It was just a wall with as many small square windows stuck in it as could be managed, all staring like so many eyes. From the gutter which ran along the moss-grown base, to the coping stone on the summit of the wall, not a vestige of ornament was to be descried. The entrance, a small mean doorway, was at one end, and looked as if it were a mere afterthought. The windows were all gone, not even the woodwork remained, and the great thickness and solidity of the limestone walls was shown at the openings they made.

'Come down to the seat in the hedge,' said Honor Quin. 'We shall not be able to stay long.' She led the way to a bench in a thicket. It commanded a beautiful view of the open country and of the old approach to Lambert's Castle—a two mile long drive between what had once been a double avenue of beeches and oaks. Only the stumps remained now, with here and there a young seedling springing up among them.

It was a beautiful afternoon, still sunlit, and though the day was declining, warm and balmy. Marion forgot her curiosity, and leaned back, gazing out over the valley

with a dreamy vague enjoyment of the scene. She had picked primroses and periwinkle blossoms as she came along and had begun to make them into a posy. Her fingers had ceased this employment, and she was too absorbed to notice Honor Quin's meaning looks at her, nor the kind of conscious melancholy expressed by Mary Ahearne's face and attitude.

Honor Quin, on the contrary, was absorbed in her desire to fathom the truth of the report that Mary had refused Harry Capel, and if the report were confirmed to discover the reason for such a step. She shrewdly suspected that Harry Capel was one of her own rejected swains. She had never been informed of the 'message,' but she had been told by one of the shop girls that Mrs. Capel had been singing her son's praises there on market-days for some time after Christmas. She had divined the message and its result, but she considered Harry Capel a very suitable match for her friend, and she was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery. The servant Judy's impudent innuendoes had not been unnoticed by her. She moved a little round in her seat so as to face Mary Ahearne, and said tentatively in a low voice into which she tried to infuse a tone of sympathy:

'You have been crying to-day, Mary.' Miss Mauleverer heard this, descended from cloudland at once, and turned round so suddenly that she dropped her bouquet.

'What is the matter?' she asked sympathetically.

Mary Ahearne turned her head aside for a few moments before she replied. 'Oh, nothing, nothing of any great matter. You might guess it.'

A pause of some minutes ensued, and then she resumed with a broken voice, 'Harry Capel's old mother was up here yesterday and had as much talk and work. She knew well it was no use, yet she would try to make me say yes, flattering and bothering me. The poor boy was distracted and was drinking, as if that was anything new—and when she found that would not do, then she fell to abuse. What was I looking for—who was I thinking to get? It was not every day I would meet with a Capel. That's not the half of it,

and when she was gone, much as she came, it was then the row began in earnest,—mother, and Luke, and all of them at me.'

Mary Ahearne was crying now. Marion was listening in a kind of half-credulous wonder, as a child hears a fairy tale. She could not understand it in the least, but did not like to interrupt or to ask questions. Honor Quin was moved to compassion by the distress evinced by her friend.

'I cannot see what is this hurry to get you married,' she observed. 'You are surely time enough.'

'Well, you see—you won't tell ever what I'm saying to you, will you, Honor, or you, Miss Maulever? The lease has little over a year and a half to run, and Luke must marry a fortune to pay the fine. Margaret and I must both be out of his road before he can get that. Margaret will be easy enough to settle, but while they have a bit of money for me they want me to get off. He will have all the better chance, you know.'

'Yes,' assented Honor Quin, with a nod. She was wondering to herself if Luke had had the impudence to think of marrying herself.

'And do you hate Harry Capel?' asked Marion, opening her eyes wide and leaning forward.

'I don't like him,' answered Mary Ahearne, quite simply.

Marion sighed and looked bewildered.

'If you heard his old father,' pursued Mary, 'the night the two of them came up after the message was sent before Shrove. I went off, of course, to my room, but I thought Judy would be listening, so I crept down quietly to the door of the room. There she was, I need not tell you; so out of pure curiosity I listened myself. My dear, you would think it was a sack of potatoes that was in question. They were all sitting round the table and disputing. Three hundred pounds was nothing—notin', as old Capel called it—you know how he speaks. He was not going to take any such match for such a boy—a fine clever boy like that, who was used to have everything and had his horse kept for him! to go to every funeral in the country. Then the fight began. He asked for the boar-pig and that half

shorthorn my father thinks so much of; Mr. Harry—the fine clever boy that he is—sitting by with a surly face on him, and looking as if he did not care one pin. Oh yes,' went on Mary, and her voice, which had up to this seemed merely melancholy, grew bitter, 'I'll tell you another thing. I did not hear this, of course, they were too 'cute to say it to us. My mother was told that old Capel said I was no beauty at all—I was too fallow.'

Honor Quin burst out laughing. Poor Mary Ahearne wiped away a tear and then laughed also, but a little hysterically. Marion looked from one to the other with amazement, not unmingled with disgust. Honor Quin's behaviour was nothing out of the common. She knew her of old to be rough and coarse-natured. She had always borne the name of being 'worldly' at school, whereas Mary Ahearne was her exact antithesis.

'That was why they wanted the shorthorn cow, Mary,' said Honor Quin as soon as she could speak. 'She was to make up for your complexion,' and she went off into another fit of jarring laughter.

'She will stop where she is, then!' said Mary. 'That would be a very dear price to pay for a yellow skin.'

She felt hurt by the roughness and hardness of her companion, and turned shrinking away with the same look of uncomplaining, almost hopeless melancholy. As she did so she met Miss Mauleverer's eyes bent on hers wonderingly.

When Marion saw the tears glistening on the eyelashes of the face so close to hers, and the crushed, pained look, she forgot her disgust and stooped a little nearer with an impulse of pity and tenderness.

'Do not mind!' she said, so low that Honor Quin could not hear her, and she laid her cheek, for a second only, against that of Mary Ahearne. She rose suddenly; then she felt too irritated to remain quiet, and went away to a clump all grown over with periwinkle. It was the pedestal on which the statue of some heathen divinity had been perched, long ago tumbled over and broken into fragments. While Marion was busy gathering the peri-

winkles a noise made itself heard which startled the others as well as herself. Some one was forcing open the garden door by which they had entered. Then it was flung to noisily.

'That is Luke,' said Mary. In a few minutes her brother appeared out of the thicket and approached their seat. As soon as he caught sight of them he took the pipe out of his mouth, extinguished it, and put it in his pocket. He had a newspaper under one arm, and he folded it up roughly and put it in his pocket also.

He was a very handsome young fellow of about twenty-five, tall and well-built and straight, but a look of dissipation and something of sullenness made his face unpleasant. He bowed, hat in hand, to Miss Mauleverer, who acknowledged his presence by a silent inclination of her head. Honor Quin shook hands with him very formally and with an air of great reserve, for she knew that Luke Ahearne's mother believed her handsome boy to be a match fit for any lady in Ireland, and she was resolved to keep him at a distance.

Luke's mother had indeed cast a fly over the big fish in the interests of her son. It was but a half-hearted venture, still she thought it no more than her duty to Luke to attempt the heiress of Barrettstown in his behalf. He was considered a good match, viewed in the light of the customs of the district. The two girls were provided for—Mary the eldest and plainest was to have four hundred pounds fortune; Margaret, the youngest of the family, a handsome well-grown girl of nineteen, who was still in school, was to have three. Consequently the farm of Lambert's Castle on coming into Luke's hands would be unencumbered with the conditions of paying off, or rather buying out, his sisters' interests therein. If old Ahearne had not saved the amount requisite to provide the two girls with dowries, the farm would have been charged with the burden of their maintenance for life, they having an equal interest in the property with their brother, and the customary mode of procedure to be followed would be that Luke should procure a wife possessed of a fortune, this fortune to be

handed over to, and divided between, the two sisters, each of whom would then marry another farmer and buy out his encumbrances in like manner. This the usual system would have been quite possible to Luke Ahearne but for the fact that the lease of Lambert's Castle was fast running out, and that Tighe O'Malley might be naturally expected to demand a heavy fine for a renewal. His wife's fortune would go to renew the lease. The old couple would hand him over the farm and stock, retaining also, in accordance with the custom, one room in the house, the use of the kitchen, a ridge of the potato-field, a ridge of the turnip-field, a ridge of the cabbage and mangold-fields, and the grass and milk of one cow. This system, if sanctioned by custom, was but rarely found to work smoothly or well, the arrangement being one which offered peculiar temptations to fallen human nature in the shape of people in law. But custom ranks paramount in such societies as that of Barrettstown, where even a new seed potato is, on principle, refused a trial.

Customs of all sorts were to these people as law. Luke's father was a most hard-working, honest, industrious man, who grudged no exertion, but even he, a descendant of a good old Irish family, would not on any account dig up the bushes for fear of offending the fairies, and bought yellow meal for the fowls and pigs, even when he could not sell his own barley and oats, because of the tradition that animals would not thrive on food grown on their own ground.

Old Ahearne, quiet and peaceable though he was, had been once summoned to Quarter Sessions for assaulting an old woman. He had come upon her one day at the running stream that crossed one of his fields. She was nearly blind, and was only groping to find the stepping-stones by which to cross, but the old farmer coming up and observing her, concluded that she was laying pishogues (charms) to break the legs of his cattle when they came to drink, and then and there fell upon her and gave her a beating.

Luke laughed heartily at his father's superstitions, but

he had nevertheless his own. He could not bear to meet a red-haired woman in the morning, or to see a single magpie, and he firmly believed that the wild sounds with which the south-west storms beat on the exposed heights of Lambert's Castle, were the cries of drowned sailors' souls, tempest-tossed and driven in expiation of unprepared death.

He was in haste to get married, for two reasons. He wanted to secure the fine, and thereby the lease, and he wanted to be his own master, and the master of Lambert's Castle. Therefore it was that he had urged his sister's acceptance of Harry Capel's offer. The sooner the girls were got out of the road the better. As for her unwillingness and hanging back, that was all nonsense. A fine young fellow with a comfortable farm, his brothers and sisters all settled in America! Old Capel and his wife were giving up, and going out of the place, out of her road entirely. What could Mary be thinking of? he asked himself. He was excessively angry with her, or rather he would have been had not another set of circumstances combined to put him rather in good-humour.

He had been visiting Waterford lately, and had there discovered what he was in search of, a rich shopkeeper's daughter, whose people he had reason to believe, from the account given by his ambassador, did not disapprove of his suit. This item of intelligence he kept to himself, knowing well that the greatest reticence and caution were necessary. He felt greatly elated at his good fortune, and unconsciously swaggered a little in his manner and gait. He had never seen the Waterford damsel, nor was he in any particular hurry to do so, for he was carrying on a flirtation with a pretty little girl whom he had met at a wake. He did not care very much for her, and he had never had the slightest intention of marrying her, but she was exceedingly attractive; and all the young fellows, even Harry Capel, who was to marry his sister, were running after her. So Luke of course was to the fore with the rest in his attentions to pretty Bessy Rooney, and rather took pride in distancing them, his handsome face and figure,

together with his expectations, and his fine riding-horse, giving him advantages in the field.

He hated Honor Quin, as did for that matter most of the young men of the district. He had no idea that his mother had been so foolish as to make even an approach to matrimonial overtures to the Quins. Luke had opportunities of knowing a great deal more than his mother did about that family and their pretensions, and he would have been furious if he had divined what had really happened.

He threw himself on the grass now, close by the bench occupied by the visitors and his sister, and, addressing the latter, asked her if she had taken his coursing dog Sheelah out for a run that day as he had desired her.

'No, not yet, Luke; it is time enough,' she answered timidly.

Luke rolled over on his elbow. 'When it wasn't done before, you can let it alone now. Is not that too bad, Miss Quin?' he asked, turning to that young lady. 'I bid Mary take out Sheelah for a run, and she forgets all about it, and I that have entered her for the Coursing Cup!'

Luke addressed Miss Quin in a tone of rollicking gallantry, meaning to impose on her credulity, and to lead her to suppose that he was offering her attentions of honourable import.

'Indeed,' observed Miss Quin, in rather a chilly tone.

'There's not her equal in the whole of Cork,' pursued the youth. 'Miss Maulever, did your brother tell you of the trial we had with Sheelah and two of O'Malley's best greyhounds down there in the demesne? Cooper the stableman said he never saw the like of Sheelah. I'd back her against any dog in the county for fifty pounds,' he boasted, raising his voice as if there might be some one lurking about to take him up.

Honor Quin's face presented such a mixture of disapproval and frozen reserve that the youth was fain to direct his conversation to Miss Mauleverer and his sister, which he did, every now and then looking to see how Miss Quin endured the transference of his attentions. He had

as high an estimate of his own market-value as she had of hers. Of course she was a prize, an enormous prize, and he almost acknowledged that she was above his reach. However, who could tell—Luke, whom his mother spoiled frightfully, knew himself to be good-looking—but that she was secretly not indifferent to him ; what else brought her to Lambert's Castle? She had been there to see Mary several times since Christmas, although this was the first time that she had been so fortunate as to find him at home. So he played off all his rustic airs and graces upon Miss Mauleverer, and put Miss Quin's stern expression down to jealousy pure and simple. Honor was indeed angry, but for a very different reason. She was beginning to think that Mary had something to do with the unwelcome appearance of her brother, and was almost impugning her *bona-fides*, but a glance at the poor girl's troubled, anxious face dispelled the illusion at once.

She rose now and shook out her dress. 'It is getting late,' she said, taking out her watch.

'My mother has tea ready for you, Honor. Miss Mauleverer, you will come in for a moment, won't you?' Luke added his entreaties to his sister's, and led the way back to the yard. The cows had come in and were being milked. Judy was at one and the servant-man was busy with another. The rest waited their turns patiently. There was a delicious scent of new milk all about, and with it a mingled bouquet of spring grass and all manner of budding herbs and blossoms that each cow exhaled with her every breath.

Standing at the door of the farmhouse, knitting in hand, the mistress of the house was superintending operations. On catching sight of the young people she let her spectacles slide down her nose and advanced to meet them. She was a well-favoured comely person, who looked about fifty, but who in reality wanted several years of that number. Country life, and particularly farm life, ages women rapidly. Her face was as freckled as a turkey's egg, and presented an odd mixture of simplicity and shrewdness, with a look at times, especially when her eye fell upon her son, of anxiety that was almost plaintive.

'Miss Quin, dear, I am very proud to see you,' she observed heartily, holding out a hand that afforded a marked contrast to her daughter's—so roughened and hardened was it by work. 'Good day to you, Miss Maulever,'—she added a curtsey to this—'I hope your aunt and all the family are well. It is a lovely day—yes, thank God for it. Now you will come in and have your tea. Mary, did you take the young ladies for a good walk?'

'No, just into the garden.'

'Dear, you are so fond of that garden, you seem to think that every one must like it too. Mary would live in that old place if she could, Miss Quin.'

'Luke!' roared a strident angry voice from the gate. 'Luke! and be hanged to you I say. Why did you not come back with that chain bit I sent you for?'

It was old Ahearne coming up from the turnip-field. His flushed angry face cleared when he saw the girls, and he lifted his hat civilly as he advanced.

'Oh! now I never thought, sure, he had so good an excuse, and I forgive him this time entirely. Miss Quin, I am delighted to see you, I protest. This fine day and yourself together do anybody's heart good.'

He had a welcome for Miss Mauleverer too, but that was too markedly different in kind to escape the notice of the suspicious and watchful Honor.

'But what are you standing out here for? I do vow and protest you are most neglectful to keep them here in the yard. Luke, you clown! why do you not ask the ladies inside? My God! man, look at Miss Quin here; and you hanging your head in that fashion.'

This meant nothing but civility—bare civility—but the heiress was almost frightened, and was vowing in her inmost soul never to set foot again in Lambert's Castle while she lived. She cast a look at Miss Mauleverer, but she was engaged watching some very young chickens hiding themselves in their mother's feathers, and was apparently careless of all else. So in they went, Miss Quin unwillingly leading the party.

Whether it was in obedience to some tacit hint from his wife, whose suspicious shrewdness had divined the state of affairs and whose pride had taken alarm lest her darling Luke should have made himself cheap, or that he really had no mind to lose time, old Ahearne returned to his field; and Luke, after loitering aimlessly about the entry for a moment, took his departure also.

The entry led straight into the kitchen, a roomy apartment paved with cobble stones. A huge turf fire blazed on the hearthstone; over this hung an oven-pot with a smaller fire blazing on its lid. A yellow-painted dresser was well plenished with delf. Rush-bottomed painted chairs stood about. There were pictures on the walls, but so stained by peat-smoke that they could not be distinguished. A wooden bench with a high polished back stood close to the fireplace, over which a couple of guns were hanging. A big old long-bodied clock with a dusky face ticked wheezily and deliberately in a corner, and between the beats of the pendulum the shrill chirp of the crickets made itself heard from the hearth. The faintest possible odour, the merest echo of the pigs' pot was traceable in the hot air, along with the smell of the turf and of the numerous rows of fitches and hams dependent from the ceiling. Sundry indistinct motions as of plumage rustling, and now and again a discreet *sotto voce* cluck, betokened the presence of some members of the feathered flock. A turkey with a valuable sitting of eleven eggs was accommodated with a basket in the quietest and most remote corner of the place. A 'late sitter,' about whose 'clutch' being addled grave apprehensions were entertained, was placed below the dresser, and a pet goose of notorious ill-temper stretched out her long white neck and bit and hissed at them as the party walked past her into 'the room.' Marion Mauleverer swerved aside from the snapping beak.

'Don't mind her,' said Mary. 'She allows no one to come near her but my mother, and they are the greatest friends in the world.'

'That is so, indeed,' corroborated Mrs. Ahearne. 'Would you believe it?—one evening I was sitting there not long

ago by the fire, and she got off the nest and came over and sat down beside me on the floor, just like a Christian, she is so 'cute!'

They were in the sitting-room now. It was much smaller than the kitchen. The floor was covered with cocoa-matting, and it had all the appearance of the best and the least used room of the house. Mary's piano, with a dish of waxen fruit under a glass shade on top of it, occupied a conspicuous place. A haircloth-covered sofa shrouded in antimacassars stood against the wall at one side. Chairs to match it, also covered with antimacassars, every one of which fell off on their entry, were ranged round the others, and were looked down upon by coloured prints of the Holy Family, Pope Pius the Ninth, Daniel O'Connell, and some lesser national luminaries. There was not a single book to be seen, except Moore's *Melodies*, which lay in their bright green binding on top of the piano.

Tea was presently served. Judy carried in a Britannia metal teapot which stood rather lamely on the tea-tray, one of its feet having been melted off at the kitchen fire. The contents of the oven-pot proved to be a huge cake, of a fine golden-brown without, and within, as rich as eggs, sour cream, butter, and currants could make it. Honor Quin sat for a minute with her cup of tea untouched before her. Her perturbation of mind hardly allowed her to notice the cake which her hostess put on her plate.

'Miss Quin, dear, you take nothing,' said Mrs. Ahearne. 'May be you would prefer a glass of sherry wine. Dear me, to think I should have forgotten to ask you that before!'

Mrs. Ahearne's hands fell into her lap, and she looked grieved at the thought of her breach of manners.

'Not at all, Mrs. Ahearne,' replied the young lady addressed. 'I never drink sherry wine.' Honor Quin spoke with her company voice, and in her stiffest and most impressive manner. She had encased herself from head to foot in a buckler of formality. Her distrust of the Ahearne family's intentions towards her almost forbade her accepting any of the proffered hospitality; Luke's disappear-

ance reassured her, however, and she ventured to accept the refreshment offered.

After tea, Mary Ahearne wrapped a light shawl over her shoulders and accompanied her friends down the cart-track towards the gate.

'When shall we see you again?' asked Marion, when they were about to part. Honor Quin turned round and identified herself with the question.

'I—I don't know. I shall be at Mass on Sunday—and after that to the convent.' A deep sigh accompanied the words, and the others remained silent.

'I wish 'twas Sunday,' continued Mary dolorously. 'I'd be settled in my mind one way or other.'

'How?' asked Honor Quin.

'My mother is to see Father Paul on Saturday; she has set that day this long time. She thinks to settle the day for the marriage, and send word to the Capels to finish the business. But indeed she will be disappointed.'

'Mary Ahearne,' said Honor Quin, 'surely your mother knows you want to be a nun?'

'Oh yes! but she would rather I got married.'

'What difference can it make to her whether you go into the convent or marry?'

'You always got your own way in everything, Honor Quin,' replied the girl sadly, 'but there is no one in your family to be thought of but yourself, and that is quite different from me.'

'Yes,' assented Miss Quin, 'it is different.' The thought occurred to her that her mother when reminding her of the advantages which surrounded her, which she did half a dozen times a week, had surely some complications like this of the Ahearne family in her mind when she laid special stress upon the circumstance of her being an only daughter and having but one brother. Honor never realised her full meaning until now, and in her heart she entirely agreed with her.

Marion was in a brown study, that was half composed of disgust and repulsion. She pitied her old schoolfellow and sympathised with her, but she was at the same time revolted

by the matter-of-fact manner of Mary Ahearne's recital of her woes. She had not been shocked, that was clear, not even surprised. She seemed to feel the sordid mercenary aspect of the affair much less than the obstruction offered to her going into the convent; took all that, in short, as an everyday occurrence. Marion brooded over this revelation of the world and its ways, which had so suddenly and unpreparedly come upon her, with a feeling of sickened disgust. She had heard of marriages before in the district, and much talk of 'fortunes' and such details, but a first-hand account such as Mary Ahearne's had never before come to her knowledge. Nor could it very easily have done so. She had been kept close at school until the preceding Christmas, or some time before it, and she had no companions and no acquaintance in Barrettstown. It was only the second time that she had been at Lambert's Castle. She had never been inside Honor Quin's house, and the only place at which she met her was the parish chapel on Sundays at last mass, or the eight o'clock service on weekdays. Exchanging visits was never even thought of. Miss D'Arcy's condition of health, if no other consideration existed, forbade the like, and there was no attraction whatever to Marion in social intercourse with such widely different individuals as these girls and her other school companions. She had sat on the same bench for five or more years with Mary Ahearne, Honor Quin, and some others of the shopkeeper and farmer class. Miss D'Arcy, in the intervals of clear-headedness which her ailment permitted, exhorted Marion to keep herself aloof from such low company, and at other times found it convenient to patronise them for her own ends. Father Paul treated everybody with the same kindly paternal manner, and would have reckoned it a sin to observe social distinctions in the letter, though in the spirit he was intensely aristocratic, and was proud beyond measure of his own relationship to the D'Arcys. Marion felt puzzled between her guides, who differed and agreed in such a confusing manner. However, no very striking attractions presented themselves to bring her into conflict with either. Honor Quin was worldly and

self-conceited, Mary Ahearne was pious to an irritating degree, and insipid. Nevertheless, five years' intercourse with both had compelled a kind of familiarity and interest, almost affection. Notwithstanding the radical differences of being, the Mauleverers' position, as regarded the village and its inhabitants, was peculiar and characteristic, and to understand it fully without keeping Tighe O'Malley and Barrettstown in mind would not be easy. Ever since Miss D'Arcy's memorable appearance in the town and her encounter with the young heir of the Mauleverer estate she had been more or less an invalid. She had had a severe stroke of paralysis, and the utmost quiet and retirement was necessary for her, as her existence ever since then had hung upon a thread. Tighe O'Malley had left Barrettstown shortly afterwards, and had not been seen again by any one save when he paid a flying visit once on the occasion of his marriage. He was no permanent or abiding figure, and the inhabitants scarcely thought of him at all. The Mauleverers, in consequence of his absence probably, received more homage and respect than they suspected to be due to that cause. He was married—had married some years after the date of Miss D'Arcy's mysterious appearance on the scene,—but no one in the town had had more than a fleeting glimpse of his wife.

Mary Ahearne had conducted her friends to the high-road, and turned back then up the boreen. Marion looked back and saw her head and shoulders wrapped in the black shawl, passing along over the hedge top.

'Does she not look like a nun now? Look!' she said, addressing Honor Quin. 'She always did. You know Mother Sylvestre always said she had a nun's face.'

'So be it! Old Capel may be thinks so too,' said Honor Quin, with a sneering laugh. 'Those Ahearnes have great impudence. Luke Ahearne has conceit enough for anything, and his old father too, encouraging him! If George had been there he would soon let them know where they were.'

She spoke in an angry, offended tone. Marion stared at her. Here was a fresh mystery.

'Those fellows,' pursued the irate Honor, 'think a girl

cannot pass their road but they have only to hold up their finger to her.'

'What!' ejaculated Marion involuntarily.

'Yes. They all think that—Jim Cadogan is worse; he said not long ago he had only to give out that he wanted to be married and he could get his pick of thirty or forty girls in the county, and all with money, and all wanting to be settled.'

'To be settled!' echoed Marion.

'Men are disgusting,' continued Miss Quin, who now talked quite fluently, and had evidently mounted her hobby. 'They are all alike as far as I can see. I am sorry for Mary Ahearne, I will say that, and I think she is foolish. You see, Harry Capel is as good as she has any right to expect. He is rough, but so are the Ahearnes rough—very rough people,—though I believe Mrs. Ahearne had a thousand pounds of a fortune and belonged to a very respectable family.'

'Mary Ahearne has four hundred pounds,' observed Marion absently.

'Yes. I wonder if she will get all that with her if she goes into the convent. Catch the nuns take her without it—what fools they are!'

'Eh!' repeated Marion, startled.

'I said what fools they would be to take a girl like her without money. She's not accomplished or able to teach. Do you imagine they take in people to support them, or for God's sake?'

'Oh! Honor Quin, you really say dreadful things.' Miss Mauleverer felt perfectly stunned, as though she had listened to blasphemy.

'Tis no scandal, not a bit,' retorted Honor Quin defiantly. 'I'm not saying a word but bare truth. Ask Father Conroy if you like, Miss Maulever. You won't even get into heaven without money nowadays, for that matter. An' after all,' she added, with a bitter gibe in her voice, 'what is any one without money?'

Marion threw her a curt good-evening, and crossed the dike into the osier field, for they were close to the town now.

CHAPTER VI

**'These signs have marked me extraordinary,
And all the courses of my life do show
I am not in the roll of common men.'**

It was nearly dark when Marion entered her aunt's sitting-room. The lamp was lighted, and Kitty Macan was in process of getting ready the tea-table. A lively discussion was going on. Miss D'Arcy's voice was raised in shrill reproof, and Kitty Macan emphasised her arguments with the plates, accompanying each contradiction with a thump on the table.

'It is you at last, Marion!' cried Miss D'Arcy, on seeing Marion enter; 'and now will you have the goodness to tell me where and how you have spent your afternoon, and above all what has kept you so late? It is disgraceful to think of a young lady being out alone until dark.'

'I was not alone, Aunt Ju; I have been at Lambert's Castle, and I walked home with Honor Quin.'

However, before this much had been said in explanation, Miss D'Arcy had reverted to the subject of her previous conversation with Kitty Macan.

'Here is a pretty message from the Barretts town Castle ranger about the goat! The impudence—the impudence that you have, Kitty Macan, to come and tell me such a thing!'

'Deed then, now, ma'am, what could I do with the message but just to give it to yourself as I got it? Oh Lard, yes! just as I was given it I give it to you, ma'am.'

'The goat,' pursued Miss D'Arcy, 'will be shot the

next time she is seen in the demesne. She made her way straight to the terrace-gardens, and has destroyed the young trees.'

'Johnny Hurrell say she have done depredations entirely on the rose bushes, and he swore his soul he would have killed her dead dat minute, only he knew she was ours. Deed yes, Miss Marion, you'd better be tinkin' of dat. 'Twas you let her out, and where is her chain, too? Johnny he carried her here in a bit of a rope, said she had no chain on her. Where did you fasten her this morning? I told you, Miss D'Arcy, I had no hand or part in dat. 'Twas miss, dere, and I cannot find the chain nowhere.'

'It was I sent the goat, or let her go, across the weir, and the chain has fallen into the river.' Marion spoke quite unconcernedly.

'And why, may I ask, did you take upon yourself to do any such thing?' demanded Miss D'Arcy.

'Oh! she would have destroyed the flowers there at the race, and she has eaten down all the grass in the garden. Godfrey, you might have fished up the chain as I asked you to.'

'What are you talking about?' asked her brother, who had just then sauntered in.

'O'Malley's ranger, one of his servants, has had the insolence to send an impertinent message to me. Kitty Macan, repeat what you were told to repeat, as you say, to Mr. Godfrey. Godfrey, listen to what this creature had the audacity to say to my face; Kitty Macan, you forget yourself strangely.'

'Do I, begob!' answered Kitty, who was clearly quite unaffected by Miss M'Arcy's outraged dignity, and continued to clatter the plates and knives.

'Nanny went up to the terrace and did mischief,' explained Marion. 'She never is content with grass when she can get flowers—nasty thing! and Hurrell brought her home, saying she would surely be shot next time.'

'That's all,' observed Godfrey nonchalantly. 'Come and give me my tea. I'm busy this evening. I shall drive

the goat into the demesne to-morrow myself, and let Hurrell shoot her if he dares.'

'Well, den, I wouldn't, if I was you,' observed Kitty. 'Dat's just why they are so partic'lar, because Tighe O'Malley and his lady are coming home. Dey's comin' directly, all of a sudden, and some beautiful quality wit' dem.'

They all started with surprise, and for an instant no one spoke. Marion, after a glance at her aunt, left her seat, and under pretence of doing something at the side-table, crossed over to Kitty Macan and pulled her sleeve.

'What did Father Paul tell you—often—and the doctor too?'

'Oh Lard, yes! not to speak of dose O'Malleys. I was forgetting, yes,' returned Kitty below her breath, with a glance in Miss D'Arcy's direction.

'I want tea, I say,' repeated Godfrey. 'Aunt Jul, can't we have tea new? I want to do some work.'

Miss D'Arcy rang the bell, and then without rising from her chair turned herself about and unlocked the press beside her; then she took out her tea-caddy. As the door swung open it disclosed a motley store ranged upon the two shelves, papers of sugar, flour, starch, jostled bars of soap and strings of candles. A large bowl of eggs flanked a piece of bacon. A quantity of papers, books, and parcels were jumbled together in a heap with these. No one was ever allowed to go near this museum of treasures, over which its proprietress kept watch and ward all day, while at night the key reposed with her great old watch, her rosary and her *paroissien* on a table beside her bed. Her bedroom was immediately behind the sitting-room, a pleasant sunny apartment looking into the garden, and between these two rooms, with the exception of her Sunday excursion to mass, which was made in a bath-chair, Miss Juliet D'Arcy's life was now spent.

Gertrude came in at this juncture, and laid a music roll in the window-seat. She had been down to Chapel House to practise, as was her wont every afternoon. Her brown hair was all tossed and her cheeks flushed. She was a

well-grown bright child, full of animal health and energy, which just now found an outlet in her school tasks. As Godfrey was Juliet D'Arcy's spoilt darling she was Father Paul's, and at the convent school her strong will and force of character made itself felt also.

'Godfrey, darling,' observed Miss D'Arcy, when the evening meal, an exact replica of the breakfast, had begun, 'you eat nothing. Let Kitty get you an egg—do!'

'Please, do, Godfrey, you are working so hard; keep up your strength,' added Gertrude jibingly.

The irony provoked no comment from her brother, who allowed Kitty to be summoned without demur. Miss Juliet selected with great discrimination an egg from the bowl in her store, and confided it to Kitty Macan, who in due time presented it to her young master with the wrong end up in a wine-glass.

Gertrude, on seeing her brother begin to eat the egg, was taken with an uncontrollable fit of laughing.

'Leave the room!' commanded Miss D'Arcy, staring at her with her eyes open as if with astonishment. Gertrude obeyed, laughing still, and first drinking up the contents of her cup.

'Godfrey,' said Marion, after a long pause, 'you *might* have fished up that chain now; may be it will never be got.'

He raised his dark eyes for a moment and then answered deliberately, 'What matter?'

'She will ruin the garden, and go into Quirke's cabbage-fields. Oh, Godfrey, you *must*!'

'I will tell you what you may do, miss,' spoke Miss D'Arcy, 'and that is just to go and get a cord and a chain from your friend Miss Quin. She will be only too glad to oblige you; do you hear?'

'Yes,' answered Marion, in a voice that plainly meant No.

'You can just set off for the town and tell the Quins you want the loan of a chain or a strong bit of cord. If you *will* know people of that kind, at least let them be of use to you.'

To this speech neither of the young people paid the slightest attention.

'I confess,' went on Miss D'Arcy, 'I wonder at your condescension to that Quin girl, that you would allow people to see her in your company. I do not object in the same manner to Ahearne's daughter at Lambert's Castle. Farmers are another thing, but these tradespeople! I tell you, Marion, it is time that ceased.'

'Well, I was at school with her long enough. You made no objection to that.'

'That was another thing. When I was at school, long long ago in Paris, the daughters of the tradesmen of the *quartier* were in the same class as young duchesses. It did not follow that they were companions in after life.'

'Marion isn't a duchess,' observed Godfrey.

'Well, you will not tell me, sir, that she is not in a very different position to Quin's daughter.'

Miss D'Arcy had drawn herself up straight, and looked from one to the other with an angry, excited look. Neither replied to her. The boy's face grew darker and more lowering. His long-shaped velvety eyes, black now in the evening light, were fixed with an expression at once forbidding and defiant on Miss D'Arcy's. Marion's too seemed to question her, but in a different way. The old woman's face, as she met those two glances, changed in a marked and peculiar manner. In spite of her effort, the stern reproof she attempted to convey by her look vanished. Her eyes fell under Godfrey's, and her underlip trembled. Her hands moved and shook, and she pushed her chair back a little, and turned herself sideways from the table.

Godfrey rose slowly from his seat, and, putting his hands in his pockets, strolled out carelessly without even turning his head. Marion listened to him while he unlatched the hall door, and went down the steps into the drive. He had not taken his cap, which lay on the window-seat, so he could not intend to go far. She handed her aunt a smelling-bottle containing salts, which were badly in need of renewing. Then she moved the chair back to

its wonted corner of the hearth, dropped a couple of sods on the fire, and seated herself on an old worked *prie dieu* chair opposite her grand-aunt's place.

Little by little Miss D'Arcy's agitation passed off. Her troubled perturbed face regained its wonted aspect, and her hands ceased their strange nervous action. Marion, without seeming to do so, watched her quietly until Kitty Macan, having finished her own refection, came in. Then she slipped out and into the front yard to look for Godfrey. A passing glance assured her that he had gone out on the river-bank. It was nearly dark, but she soon found him standing at the near end of the race.

'Oh, there you are,' she began. 'What made you speak that way to Aunt Ju, Godfrey? You know she is not to be upset or excited.'

Godfrey began to whistle softly, and made no reply.

'Let us get up the chain,' said Marion. 'I will go and bring you the garden rake. Godfrey, you must do it now. How are we to manage the goat to-morrow?' She went round to the house yard as she spoke, and presently returned with a long-handled rake. Godfrey took it from her, and made for the weir.

'Don't fall in,' said Marion, as she, following him closely, watched him start on the rather difficult task of balancing himself on the narrow ledge.

'Now! say whereabouts it was she dropped it.'

'A little farther—two more steps. Now! just there—she let the collar and the last bit of her chain fall at that spot.'

Godfrey let the rake which he had been using as a balancing pole drop into the water, and crouched down, sitting on his heels on the narrow ledge of the weir. He then began raking and groping in the mud of the river-bottom.

'It will never be got,' he said, after a series of gropings. 'I'll move a little nearer the bank. Are you sure she let it fall on this side?'

He rose again to his full height, and retraced his steps to about half the distance, then repeated his dredging operations, to equally little purpose.

'I shall come down in the morning and dive for it,' he said. 'There is no use trying now.'

'I hope it will be got somehow. You know I got that at Chapel House, and Miss Johnston may want it again.'

'I say,' Godfrey began, 'this is comical—O'Malley coming back at last—is it not? It is now six years almost since he set foot in the place, often as he said he was coming.'

'Why does he come now, I wonder?'

'I heard it was that his wife, Lady Blanche, wants him to get into Parliament, and of course his own county is selected for that honour. He is probably coming down to salt the constituency.'

Marion listened contentedly without understanding a word. Her brother, indeed, was only quoting from the hotel-porch gathering. It was the merest echo of nonsense, but, having a vague flavour of malignant intention, was accepted unquestioningly by porch and bridge alike.

'Lady Blanche and her cousin, and the husband of the cousin, and the brother of the cousin. I forget all their names,' continued Godfrey. He seemed excited, and spoke in a bitter forced voice.

'Well, I know them. A girl told me at school to-day.' This was from Gertrude, who had come out at the side gate, and approached them unobserved. 'Lady Blanche's cousin is only a sort of distant cousin, a Mrs. Courthope. They said at first she was her sister-in-law, but Aunt Ju says she would be Lady Something Courthope. She's Mrs. Courthope, and her husband is a member of Parliament. He is coming over for Easter to inquire into the Fenians or something like that, and then there's a young gentleman from college coming with them for the fishing. He's Tighe O'Malley's relation also,—Mr.—I forget his name. He will be a man of title.'

'You know it all, I see,' said Godfrey snubbingly; 'a nice lot of salmon they'll get, won't they? I wonder how long they mean to stop?'

'I don't know. Marchmont said to Mrs. Fagan at the hotel he could not tell if Mr. O'Malley would go to London

for the season or no. He was quite surprised. The visitors will stay a fortnight.'

Marion listened to Gertrude's eager repetition of the news which she had heard at school. She also was moved by the news. She wondered vaguely what effect upon herself this much-talked-of home-coming of the master of Barrettstown would have. Some it must have; Tighe O'Malley was no favourite, and the country people and townfolk either pretended to, or really did look on the Mauleverers as the rightful heirs, and treat them as such. This was in the absence of the unlawful owner and master, as they chose to esteem him. How his presence among them might work remained to be seen.

All three stood still and were silent, each of them occupied with different thoughts, though with eyes fixed on the same object—the road leading to the great entrance of the Castle. This, which was private, ran by the river on the opposite side, but the lodge gates were hidden in a great clump of trees. No one could come or go on that road without being seen from the mill-house gates. Marion was thinking that she must avoid the river road henceforward on that account, so that she might not see any of the newcomers. Gertrude reflected that on and after tomorrow she would go to school and come home by the river road, in order to see as much as possible of the travellers to and from Barrettstown Castle. She would have to pass the chapel, and the windows of the Chapel House, these being situated about half a mile nearer to the town, and round the next bend of the river. They were, in fact, built in the demesne grounds; O'Malley had given the site shortly after he had inherited the estate.

'They are awfully busy up at the castle,' continued Gertrude; 'servants down from Dublin, and fuss, and workmen, and furniture—all sorts of things; I wonder they never came before.'

'I wonder what brings them now,' muttered Godfrey; 'wonder if he will have a couple of guards like Marchmont.' Godfrey's thoughts were full of O'Malley too, but in a different way.

'Why? why do you say that?' asked Marion startled
'Why should he want policemen?'

'Do you suppose they have forgotten the evictions up at Kilfinane four years ago? For that matter the people he transplanted on the reclaimed land, down towards the Friar's Bridge, are not too content. Marion, I'll make you a bet he has protection in a fortnight.'

'I—you will do nothing of the kind, Godfrey.'

'Marion,' said Gertrude suddenly, 'you were at Lambert's Castle to-day. Is it true that Mary Ahearne is going to enter the noviceship?'

'To enter the noviceship?—she must be a postulant first. I know nothing about it. I don't believe she will marry Harry Capel, though. Now, please not to tell anything at St. Monica's to-morrow, do you hear? or to Miss Johnston either.'

'Very well, Marion, since you wish it, but it is well you told me,' replied Gertrude.

'Why should she speak of it?' asked Godfrey scornfully, 'or you either? what has that stuff got to do with us? I wish you would both go indoors. It is time for prayers.'

Godfrey turned his back to them and blew a loud shrill whistle. Then he listened; Marion and Gertrude, astonished, listened also. For a moment there was not a sound. The hurried babble of the race, the occasional drowsy caw of a waking or dreaming rook in the woods across the river, alone broke the dark stillness. Godfrey was about to repeat his signal when a faint distant whistle came to their ears, borne along it almost seemed in unison with the river. There came a second whistle, as remote and faint, and yet different.

Godfrey uttered some ejaculation, which seemed to blend surprise and impatience in equal parts. He seized the two girls by the arms with a sudden and violent grip.

'What hour of night is this for us to be out here? In with you both—prayers are waiting—come!'

Marion offered no resistance. Gertrude struggled and protested, only to find her arm gripped more painfully.

They were pushed and pulled by their tyrant until the sitting-room was reached. Godfrey then let them go, and dropped lazily into the chair opposite his aunt.

'They were out on the bank, larking about in the damp air, Aunt Ju ; I have fetched them in to prayers. Gertrude had nothing on her head. It is not proper.'

'Quite right, dear,' assented Aunt Ju, taking no notice of Gertude's tearful protest. 'Ring the bell for Kitty.'

It was half-past nine. Kitty Macan had sent home her aide-de-camp, a barefooted girl from the town, who did all the rough work and kept her company in the kitchen, and a shock-headed boy, bareheaded like the girl, and who waited on and kept her company. She was sitting over the embers of the turf fire, meditatively awaiting the wonted signal. As soon as the sound of the bell roused her, she got up and proceeded to go through a sort of rubric of her own. She swept the hearth clean, placed the shovel and tongs to the right-hand side of the fire, close to the pile of turf, filled a bowl with clean water and placed it on the dresser. This was for the 'good people' or fairies, and she would far rather, if it came to choosing, omit her prayers than this ceremony. Having finished it she took a huge old black rosary off a nail, and betook herself to the sitting-room for family worship.

Marion handed her aunt a leather-covered prayer-book and a rosary from the oratory against the wall. The table was pulled close to Miss D'Arcy's chair, and the lamp placed so that the light fell upon the book. Gertrude took her red coral beads and knelt down before the little lamp. Marion had her accustomed place beside her aunt, who was obliged to remain sitting. Kitty Macan let herself drop on a mat before the settee at one side of the room, kneeling so as to look towards the oratory, crossed herself and ducked her head to the floor ; Godfrey waited until Miss D'Arcy had begun, then slipped noiselessly and unobserved out of the room.

The family devotions lasted twenty minutes. Miss D'Arcy read the prayers aloud from her book, although she knew them off by heart. After them came the rosary.

Decade by decade did she give it out pitilessly until the prescribed number had been accomplished. Kitty Macan prayed with unction and from the depths of her soul; the fervour of her responses quite dimmed those of the two girls. The end came at last. The rosaries replaced, Kitty Macan produced a candle-stick, and demanded, in a voice which her orisons had bereft of all but intelligibility, a candle. Miss D'Arcy crossed herself deliberately—she was always the last to finish her devotions—and refused flatly.

'Quin's shop would not keep you supplied with candle-light.' She addressed her nieces angrily. 'Go to bed in the dark.'

There was nothing for it but to obey. Gertrude, though she knew this, complained nevertheless. 'I have not done half my lessons yet. It is Godfrey who burns our candles as well as his own lamp.'

Marion replaced some books upon their shelves, kissed her aunt's forehead, and went upstairs. The narrow steep staircase led into a corridor, with bedrooms opening off it on both sides. A large window, destitute of curtain or blind, admitted a clear stream of moonlight at one end. Marion's room was a large square apartment looking out upon the garden; it commanded a view of one of the bends of the river as well, at some distance down. The window was open. She seated herself sideways in it, and remained there looking out pensively into the half obscurity; there was a moon, but it was cloudy for the moment. Before long her eye was caught by a dark shadow crossing the path at that part which her window commanded. She could just distinguish it. It vanished into shadow. After a moment some other figures flitted past. A sudden thought came into her mind; she jumped up and ran into Godfrey's room.

He was there. His lamp was burning on a table in the window. Godfrey, seated with a book open before him, was smoking. 'Shut the door, please,' he said, without looking round. 'The draught is enough to blow out the light—quick!'

She obeyed.

'I suppose you have come on the same errand as Gertrude,' he continued. 'You shall not take the lamp. I want it—though not to read by.' As he spoke he shut up the book with a snap.

'Are you not—don't you mean to read?' she asked.

'Who could be bothered?' returned he, standing up and stretching himself. 'It's all stuff of Father Paul. I'll be no bank clerk. Tighe O'Malley has the confounded impudence to propose to get me some such appointment. An excise officer, indeed! If it was some outdoor thing now, but fancy stuffing in a bank like Murphy and Kelly down there for seventy or a hundred a year! And even then, if I did——' he stopped and sighed profoundly.

'What will you do then, since you are not to go to school any more?'

'Do! I don't know. Don't ask me, Marion!' he retorted, almost savagely. 'What can I do? I don't like even to think. There, now,' Godfrey broke off, suddenly changing his tone. 'I'm off. Where is my cap? Oh, here!'

'Where are you going, Godfrey?' cried Marion, on seeing him turn down the lamp, and then swing himself over the window-sill. She ran to the window and caught hold of his jacket. He had dropped down on the roof of one of the outbuildings.

'What are you doing, Godfrey? I won't let you go!'

'Let me go! Marion, don't be a little fool. I am going down there to smoke a pipe in the river-path with some fellows. That's all. Don't make a noise. Look! do you see the light of Aunt Ju's window there on the grass, Marion? You will give her a fright if you make me lose my balance and fall into the garden. Hands off, I say! else I shall jump, and perhaps break my neck.'

She let him go unwillingly, and he walked lightly along the roof of the mill buildings to the wall next the road, stooped, laid one hand upon the coping-stone, and then let himself drop over and out of sight.

Marion gazed after him with a mingled sense of fear,

perplexity, and astonishment. 'I must tell Father Paul,' was her first articulate thought. 'Who can his companions be?'

Then she remembered the curious under-current of political ferment at that moment permeating the town, the rumours of midnight meetings, drillings on the hillsides, the increase in the number of the constabulary. It was impossible for even her, who lived a life apart, and who was forbidden to read the newspaper, to escape knowing and feeling something of the troubles that stirred the air. Could Godfrey—but no—that was impossible. Fenianism was confined to the common people, the farmers' servant-men—the poor people. There were plenty of farmers' sons engaged in it. Who was it that had said Luke Ahearne and Harry Capel, and ever so many more, were leading members? Even so, Godfrey could have no feeling in common with them. What could he have to do with them? He despised them all, as Aunt Ju did. And yet! when she thought of the whistling, the dark figures on the river-bank, and now this nocturnal excursion of the wild, untractable if lovable Godfrey, she could not help feeling **anxious and uneasy.**

CHAPTER VII

**'Now for the rebels which stand out in Ireland,
Expedient manage must be made my liege.'**

As soon as Godfrey found himself on the grassy river-side path, he put his long legs in motion at a rate which soon brought him to the upper bridge. That crossed, he turned his steps towards the Dublin Road. He passed by Chapel House, all dark now save for a light in the curate's room, next the chapel, and had got as far as the bank that skirted the cemetery without hindrance or disturbance to his onward course. Here, however, he was challenged by a low whistle, or rather a sort of chirrup, proceeding from the back of the ditch. Godfrey coughed in reply, and a dark figure rose from the shelter of the bushes, and approached him.

'Evening!' observed the newcomer, sauntering leisurely over beside him.

'What is up to-night?' asked Godfrey.

'Nothing. The boys are all up at Fenlon's. The night's too bright for practice, and there's business on hand.'

'What is the business, Cadogan?' asked Godfrey eagerly.

'Hush! don't speak so loud. Swearing in a few chaps from Skreen at the upper end of the barony; and anyhow, the peelers are after being sent up to the Knockstuart bog again—Tony Smith has sent them there now twice—to find us. It's far better drilling-ground than the demesne, and now that O'Malley's coming home we daren't go in there.'

'I see. You think now that the police have got two

sells about Knockstuart, they won't come after us there again.'

'No—hush!—what's that?' cried Cadogan. 'I thought I heard a horse's foot. Godfrey, let us get off the road. Come over here by the ditch. The moonlight is as clear as day, and the patrol might be down on us.'

'Who cares?' said Godfrey, continuing to walk in the middle of the road.

Cadogan seized his arm and dragged him over to the ditch side, where in the shadow of the bushes and weeds their presence was more likely to escape detection.

'I'll report you,' said Cadogan, 'you young ass! Is that the way you obey orders? We may meet the patrol any minute. Don't you know you may be arrested and shut up for months just for being out after dark?'

This suggestion seemed to rather sober Godfrey, who was in a perfect quiver of excitement. He walked along behind his companion and kept a sharp look-out backwards. When they had proceeded thus along the same road for something over a mile and a half, keeping well in shadow of the wall of Barrettstown demesne all the time, they came to a sharp turn. Cadogan halted. 'Slip up there to the turn and see if there's any one in sight along the road. It's a very bare one, and if we are caught on that there's no way of hiding.'

Godfrey, to whom all this secrecy and manœuvring was a perfect delight, readily obeyed, and crept to the place indicated. One glance round the turning was enough. He came flying back waving his hand.

'Four or more peelers—the mounted patrol—coming along fast.'

'Over the ditch with us, and lie flat,' said Jim Cadogan, putting his precept in practice without loss of time. Godfrey tumbled through the furze bushes which grew on top of the dike, and rolled into what was luckily a dry hollow behind it. Jim Cadogan lay down on his face and crawled up to the edge of the bank to look over. He was well in shelter, and commanded a good view of the road. In a minute the sound of horses' feet, of four mounted consta-

bulary, fell upon their ears. The dust was so thick in the roadway that they were nearly abreast of the rebels' hiding-place before these could see them. Each man carried a carbine, and the moonlight glistened on their helmets and the accoutrements of the horses. Cadogan could see them completely from behind his furze bush, and recognised each constabulary man. Godfrey lying full length saw only the tops of the helmets above the bank. Both held their breaths as the patrol passed. The men in green, moving along leisurely and in perfect silence, were soon out of ear-shot.

Godfrey confessed to a curious sensation. It was his first night out with the boys, although he had been sworn in nearly a week before. Strange thoughts flitted before his mind's eye as he raised himself on his elbow and looked after the little squad already diminishing in the moonlit distance of the road. How would it be if those representatives of a foreign tyranny were dragging him off to the constabulary barrack with them? He rather liked the idea, and pictured himself marching down the main street, the cynosure of all eyes, towards the white-washed barrack with its bullet-proof shutters and door.

'They are out of range now,' said Jim Cadogan, sitting up on the ditch; 'I was just thinking as they went by if I had a repeating rifle I could nearly do for the four of them. It would take a deal of nerve, though, and I don't think any one could be sure of more than two at so close a distance.'

'You know they have their revolvers always handy. You would be very apt to get a couple of bullets before you had rolled over the whole four.'

'Ah!' replied Cadogan, 'revolvers are very little use. It's a rare cool hand that will hit any one with a revolver taken suddenly that way. Did you ever fire one? Do you mind the way it jumps up in your hand? You should keep it very low to do any good with one of those revolvers.'

'They are out of sight of us now,' said Godfrey. 'Let us be moving.'

'Have patience, will you?' retorted his friend. 'I never saw the like of you for wanting to run your head

against the wall. I'll bet any money you will be in the county gaol before six months are over your head. Much good you'll do the cause then ! Let them round under the trees first. Godfrey ! avic ! and beg of the devil to let you alone.'

Jim Cadogan's exhortation, which had begun in a tone of unmistakable anger, rounded off into lazy good-humour as he rolled over on his back, and put a little wedge of tobacco in his mouth with which to kill time.

Godfrey pouted, but obeyed. A few minutes saw the pair once more *en route*, this time walking confidently in the middle of the road. Before very long they were joined by a couple of men, bound for the same destination,—a public-house on the roadside—a baiting-place which survived from the old coaching days. It was a two-storied building, all shut up and completely dark, and by daylight of a very dilapidated appearance. Godfrey and his party, headed by Mr. Jim Cadogan, crept round the side of the house and entered a farmyard, surrounded by stables and cow-houses. A man posted as sentry at the entry of this exchanged a password with the newcomers, and they made their way into a stable where a party of some twenty or thirty men were gathered together. A red-haired man of forbidding aspect was writing by the light of a paraffin lamp in a corner. A couple of candles enlightened the rest of an interior which might have invited the pencil of a Teniers or Metzu. A donkey, the only member of the company present who could be said to have an unquestionable right in the place, was just discernible in a remote corner, whence he stared in mild astonishment at these nocturnal disturbers of his repose. A game of Spoil Five was being played on the floor close beside the donkey. Luke Ahearne was in the act of dealing, and found time to acknowledge Godfrey's advent.

'Who is that swarthy young fellow ?' asked a man beside him, looking at the newcomer.

'Young Mauleverer,' answered Luke. 'Don't you know about him ? He's the chap ought to have Barrettstown and Tighe O'Malley done him out of it.'

'Well now,' cried the man, 'and—and——' He did not finish. What he was thinking was rather too complicated and cumbrous to be expressed by him in words; but it meant that he was proud to see a gentleman joining the cause of 'the ould dart,' and that it was a good sign of the times, and also a good investment for the gentleman himself, for, as a matter of course, if he helped the cause, the cause when successful, would help him in return. All these thoughts were expressed in the careworn face which the man, a small farmer with a 'long family,' who was under notice to quit, turned towards the neophyte.

Godfrey went up to the red-haired man and wished him good-evening. That worthy had now taken a gilt-edged prayer-book out of his pocket and laid it with much demonstration of solemnity on the table, or rather barrel-head before him.

'Mark Slevin, Jerome Dunphy, Miles Walsh——' he proceeded to read out some half score of names. The first trio called stepped out, and took the oath of obedience to the Fenian brotherhood. Godfrey stood near with an expression of countenance only warranted by a sacramental ceremony. No one else seemed in the least impressed. Almost all those present were young men, under twenty-five. Fenlon, the red-haired man, was the 'centre' for the district, and owned the public-house. He was considerably over forty. He had a farm attached to the licensed house of entertainment. There were, however, labouring men and farm-servants present also—Mat Brodigan, Ahearne's servant and ploughboy, was leaning against a wall close to Fenlon. They were talking about a couple of barrels, containing ostensibly American flour—in reality a consignment of fire-arms which were lying in Quin's shop in the village below, and of which that worthy personage had sent urgent entreaties to be relieved.

'Peter Quin isn't able to keep them there any longer. He is in terror of the peelers, and says he must get them out of that somehow.' Jim Cadogan addressed the group immediately around the table.

'Ay! That's Peter Quin for ye ever and always—old

fox!—promise everything and do nothing, and side with every one.'

'If we don't want to lose the guns we must make out some way of changing them out of that,' said Fenlon. 'I'm willing enough to take them here, but I have more in this place than I have a way for, as it is.'

'I could store them in Lambert's Castle,' said Luke Ahearne, 'but that girl Judy of ours, she is never but in and out of it.'

'Luke!' called the ploughboy from the other side of the room, 'you cannot! Judy is in and out of the old castle every day of the week, and you know she is not to be trusted.'

Luke went on with his game, merely answering Mat Brodigan by a shrug of his shoulders, 'Spoil! five,' shouted his *vis-à-vis* suddenly, flinging down the cards on the ground and seizing a number of sixpences which were lying on a piece of newspaper in the centre of the group, —'there's the jack on top of the king!' Luke Ahearne picked up and assembled the 'deck' or pack of cards, and walked over to Fenlon.

That worthy, who played, among many others, the part of host, filled young Ahearne a glass of whisky from a jar which lay at his feet beside the barrel. The new recruits were all sworn in now, and the completion of the ceremony seemed to inspire all present with a sudden thirst.

'Here!' said Luke Ahearne, filling a glass of the spirit, fiery new poteen, 'success to the cause, Godfrey, and off with it!' Godfrey's eyes looked dubiously for an instant at the proffered glass; the air of the place was thick and close enough already, but when he had swallowed at a draught the burning stuff it seemed as if he were breathing in some solid kind of matter, which his lungs declined to receive. Ahearne burst out laughing, and seizing his hand shook it violently.

'You didn't give the toast with it, as I bid you, Godfrey. There's why it choked you; well, I'm glad to see you here among the friends of the old dart, so I am! Fenlon, I say, you must make an officer of Mr. Mauleverer. He's not to be put among the commonalty at all.'

'All free and equal here, boys,' put in another voice. 'No superiors acknowledged under the Green Flag. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! If Mr. Mauleverer represents the aristocracy, well, I say let him go home to bed; we want none of them here.'

'I am not,' gasped Godfrey indignantly. 'Ahearne, what stuff you are talking, and you too, Commodore!'

'Ahearne,' interrupted Fenlon, 'sit down and hold your tongue! 'tis late enough, and don't be wasting time. Mr. Mauleverer, did you bring me the papers I asked you to look over for me?'

'The accounts? yes; there they are copied into the book and dated, and there are your papers back again.'

'Now,' called Fenlon, 'will you listen while I read the statement since this day week?'

A complete silence fell upon the assemblage.

'Total number enrolled and sworn, three hundred and seventy; new members sworn since this day week, twenty in all. Cash received for the general purposes of the organisation since last meeting in this district, eleven pounds; and I may as well remind you there are a good twenty of your subscriptions due. I haven't the names here, but I'll read them out next week. How do you think we can carry on without cash in hand? twenty pounds' worth of muskets lying below in Barrettstown, and I will have to remit for them this week.'

'Ay,' interrupted Jim Cadogan, 'and let me tell you once more, Peter Quin wants those off at once. He's going to his Easter duty next week or so, an' he's afraid he might have to confess that he'd Fenian ammunition in his place.'

A general laugh followed this. 'I'll tell you what,' said Fenlon, 'the mare and cart's going down to Barrettstown on Saturday to meet parcels at the station. I'll bid the man call on Peter Quin on his way back, and fetch up the barrels here. Only I warn you, send here and take away the guns that same night. There's no use running the danger of a search. I have as many hidden as can be managed. Tom, has old Quin got those barrels in any kind of a handy place?'

The person addressed, a shop boy of Quin's, of most unwholesome aspect, stooped forward as he answered, 'Yes, they are under a tarpaulin in the back-yard—convenient enough—there's three of them.'

'Very well,' continued Fenlon; 'now those that want guns come here *late* on Saturday night and help themselves. Any that are over I'll only bury them whatever way they are; I have no time to be greasing them. Drill meeting to-morrow night in Knockstuart Bog, and let all that can send word up to the boys out that way. Luke Ahearne and Jim Cadogan, look out for a messenger passing your road. Mr. Mauleverer, you are in that end of the district, you'll attend drill and do your best to assemble the men belonging to your company. And now—Ahearne, you owe the fund fifteen shillings—Mr. Mauleverer, there is a pound for you for expenses; keep an account and give it to me when you require more. I want you to organise for me in this district; it is not at all in such good hands as it should be.'

Godfrey took the sovereign and dropped it in his trouser pocket quite calmly. He felt a new being within himself, a fresh intoxication added itself to the whisky fumes which already possessed his brain, and he listened to Fenlon's words with the rapt attention of one who was devoted body and soul.

'You have seen the way the thing is done by that blue sheet I gave you—the entries I mean—and you can swear in as many as you can get.'

'Am I to be a "centre" then?' demanded he, amazed.

'No; not exactly, not at least for a while yet; you are sure of promotion, anyhow, sir.'

Godfrey's instinct detected the ring of insincerity and flattery in the words; but like the speaker, he himself had the caste feeling which the Irish, even in their most insubordinate moods, never wholly lose, so it was easier for him to fall into agreement with this quasi-homage, to accept the symbol in lieu of the reality than to take account of his actual position and weigh his surroundings. Luke Ahearne grinned when he saw the boy, with a countenance

expressive of importance and responsibility, advance to Fenlon and take a dirty little sixpenny pocket-book with a metallic pencil attached, and listen to the instructions whispered by the landlord. Luke himself had hitherto held this office, and very perfunctorily indeed had he discharged his duties. He was laziness personified, and moreover was imbued with no spirit of patriotism beyond that suggested by the fact of having to pay a fine on the renewal of his lease, taken in connection with a general dislike to authority in all shapes and forms; and a particular one with regard to river-fishing and the game preserves of the district. Luke intended to marry a girl with money, and to be as comfortable as he knew how—martyrdom he left to other people. He had no objection to retaining his membership for the sake of companionship, for he was intensely sociable, and the gatherings at Fenlon's and other licensed houses of entertainment were very much to his taste. Besides, he would not have dared to stand aloof. Godfrey was a youngster with nothing to do. Let him take up the work of sending messages and enrolling the youths of the mountain villages. He was ass enough and green enough, thought Luke, with a glance at the flushed, almost girlish, countenance of the new recruit. Fenlon was in earnest. His public-house prospered exceedingly by the movement, and he took this as a foretaste of what was to come as soon as the hated foreign yoke should have been cast off. He was a needy man; besides a wife and the usual 'long' family, he supported a widowed sister and her children, who had been deprived of her farm under exceptional hardships. Every one, save Luke Ahearne and a few others, had some complaint to make, some grievance to redress. They knew of no other way but this. The magistrates were all landlords, and what was the use of complaining of your landlord to a fellow-landlord. 'Quality all sided with one another,'—such was the conviction current among them. As for the labourers, they had a grievance which was indeed of a portable sort—*i.e.* hunger.

Tony Devoy, a big gaunt man, with an expression of face strongly resembling that which conventionally represents

famine, was a typical member of the labouring class of the community. He had a wife, and seven children alive out of nine that had been born to them. Seven shillings a week represented his maximum of prosperity and comfort. In winter he was frequently six weeks at a stretch without employment of any kind. He could not read or write, had never seen the sea in his life, and had never been farther from Barretstown than the town of Newmarket, fifteen miles away. Abjectly miserable and wretched as his lot seemed to be, it was not without some alleviations, some compensations. He possessed no inconsiderable share of humour, and was rather a favourite among his fellows on account of his almost invariable cheerfulness, his bright sayings earning him gratuitous drinks. One or two of these last-named windfalls, together with a hard day's work in the potato-fields, had conspired to make him very sleepy. He was leaning against the wall with his mouth wide open, breathing heavily, and every now and again swaying sideways.

'Old Brown of Lees Castle has four peelers on protection duty with him now.' Cadogan was the speaker. 'Two extra put on since the day they found the lantern in the haggard.'

'Who was telling you that?' asked Luke Ahearne, who, if he did not take an active part in the practical business of the cause, was never behind in the discussions.

Brown of Lees Castle was one of a class of proprietors become very numerous in Ireland since the Encumbered Estates Land Act, when so many of the ancient landholders fell into poverty and disappeared. His father was a Dublin solicitor, who had acquired the property according to common rumour rather unfairly. He was a Protestant—likewise of recent date,—his father having been born and brought up in the Catholic faith, had joined the ascendancy on entering into residence at Lees Castle. The family were not popular. They were zealous Evangelicals and given to proselytising—their only offence, probably, for, as landlords went, Mr. Brown was forbearing and liberal enough.

'Malden, that traveller that comes to the Hotel,'

answered Cadogan. 'He has just come round through Killarney and the Kerry districts, and he says the men there are well drilled now—could take the field any day. We are greatly behind. Commodore! I say, you must take these boys in hand sharper.'

The man addressed as Commodore, the same who had been lecturing Godfrey a while before, stood out suddenly from a dark corner. He wore a moustache and goatee, and a hat of a shape much affected then and since by Irish youths of nationalistic tendencies. He spoke with a hideous New York twang, and used transatlantic idioms of speech, all of which were imitated and handed from one to another about Barretstown as samples of inestimable humour. Cadogan and Luke Ahearne, and the other young men of their position, did not disdain to repeat these gems of speech, mimicked the tones in which they were delivered, copied the Commodore's soft felt hat, and had square-toed boots made in the pattern of his. He had been in the Federal army, had held a commission, like so many other Irishmen, soldiers of fortune everywhere outside their own country. He had been born and educated in Ireland; the second, the greater misfortune if possible of the two, at a time when Catholic education, at first proscribed by the State, was gradually falling into the unskilled hands of the Catholics themselves. The Commodore, who was a cousin of Fenlon's, was educated so as to be fit for nothing. His handwriting was too bad to allow of his going into business, if his ignorance of arithmetic did not of itself suffice to exclude him. It was before the days of Cram and intermediate education schemes, and the poor Commodore fared no better nor worse than his college—school was not a fine enough term—companions. He landed when about nineteen or twenty years of age in New York, fit for nothing, too uneducated to be a clerk, unfit to be a tradesman, not strong enough to dig. After some months' knocking about among his compatriots in the slums, he enlisted in company with a large number of Irish of the same condition, and, as soon as the war was over, embraced Fenianism. Though a type of a large class, he was a queer sort of man, genial

of manner, fluent and smart, but ignorant and wrong-headed to a degree difficult to comprehend. He felt all the deficiencies of his own training, and ascribed them characteristically to the English Government and the Penal Laws, just as he did his father's loss of his farm, the bank having seized and sold the lease to recoup themselves for money lent on its security. He was not dishonest, nor was he lazy, neither was he a drunkard; he was unpractical and unreasonable, his habits of thought, which were perfectly childish, had been formed on a wrong system. He had a pretty wide acquaintance with the poetry of the national movement, and, like Ahearne and Cadogan, never objected to drink to the toast of 'Ireland a Nation.' How he lived was a mystery. He wrote an immense number of letters and was reported to be war correspondent of some American-Irish paper. He drilled the Fenians of the district, and led a strange nocturnal sort of life; in bed all day, whether asleep or reading national literature or corresponding with his friends, many of whom belonged to the gentler sex; up and out all night, and never by any chance seen publicly in company with any person in the town. His neighbour, Cadogan, who had accompanied Godfrey Mauleverer, was a typical character also. His mother, Widow Cadogan, kept the post-office of Barrettstown, and had a small grocery and news-agency attached thereto, in the business of which her only daughter, a quiet girl of twenty-two or so, very unlike her brother in all respects, assisted her. Jim had talent; as a boy he was singularly bright, and his mother, who disliked business herself, and of course wished to advance him in the world, had intended to make a doctor of him, a priest skilled in phrenology having assured her that that profession was the one to which the youth was destined by nature. Accordingly, he was sent as soon as, perhaps before, his mother could afford the money, to the diocesan school of the district, and thence to the Catholic University in Dublin. The dissipation of the metropolis proved too strong for an ill-ballasted temperament, and Jim returned a hopeless drunkard to the little household in Barrettstown, to exer-

cise for many a long day the patience of the two forbearing women whose exertions kept it together. Father Paul had used every possible effort with the unfortunate—to no avail. His was indeed a typical case, as those who are acquainted with the rural middle class can testify.

'Take them in hand,' echoed the Commodore, in reply to Cadogan; 'why, how many do you think came to drill the other night? Twenty-five out of a roll-call of seventy. That is encouraging, isn't it? Why, who do you think is going to stand that? Look at the way the American money is coming in. Bet your souls, if I were to write an' let them know the way the drill is shirked here, that would clap a stopper on the subscriptions. Y'ought to be 'shamed o' yourselves.'

'I've been at drill every night I got word.' Tony Devoy had woke up suddenly and caught the last of the returned American's speech.

'And I,' said Quin's shop boy, whose face was livid from fatigue and want of sleep.

'Oh yes,' said Jim Cadogan, 'those aren't the men who shirk drill. It's you, Capel, and you, Luke, and the rest of you feather-bed warriors.'

'Whisht,' said Ahearne impatiently. 'I'd like to see any one pay up as regular as we do.'

This was true enough; it was only the week before that he had, for this laudable purpose, made away with and secretly sold a barrel of his father's oats to Peter Quin.

'Money alone won't do, I guess,' observed the Commodore, whose eyes were red from the combined effects of whisky and late hours. 'It is men we want. The time of action is close on, now. Two weeks after Easter we're bound to strike a blow, and make these yer bloodstained ,rants reel in their—their—their—ahem—saddles.'

It was the second time that a date had been fixed. Tony Devoy, who remotely guessed the bloodstained tyrants to be connected with the Cromwellian and '98' legends, which formed the chief part of his education, clenched his hand as if it held the pike which was lying ready at home in the thatch of his house. He would have

walked up to a cannon's mouth, with perfect confidence in himself and the same pike, had the Commodore or his 'centre' bidden him. He paid his weekly subscription regularly. Fenlon and the Commodore took charge of the financial department. Tony paid his sixpence cheerfully, although the Indian meal was missed at home. It was his protest against misery and his hard lot, and he made the offering cheerfully and in good faith. Like the rest he asked no questions. In the dark—he gave darkly and was content. The ideal which filled his dreams, his 'principality in the air,' was a social revolution which would enable him to eat bacon constantly, and beef frequently—the first-named delicacy being only attainable on Christmas days, the second he had tasted twice in his life, and then at the hands of Mrs. Folliot, the wife of the Protestant rector of the parish. A newspaper every day, and one of his children able to read it for him, was another vision that haunted Tony's dreams. He had a promising boy of an age to go to school, but debarred therefrom by want of clothes. How could a child who was at that moment clad in one leg of an old corduroy trousers, fastened mysteriously and inefficiently round his neck by a bit of string, be sent to school to the nuns? The cause, when successful, would put everything right; the beef and butter, instead of being sent away over the seas to the great enemy, would be kept at home. Poor gaunt Tony! he was so weary that even these comfortable reflections could not keep him awake.

'Then if it's only two weeks off, we must look sharp,' said Tom, the shop boy. 'But we ought to have bayonets, Cadogan! The peelers has always them bayonets—eh, Commodore, are there none for these new guns?'

'Tisn't the peelers you'll be fighting,' replied the Commodore evasively. Tom had to be satisfied with this, which was no answer. He had confidence, however, in the Commodore. He knew him to be an old soldier, and his own business was to obey; but the subject recurred to his mind and annoyed him greatly. In after years he always looked upon this omission as the cause of the failure of the Fenian rebellion.

It was late now. The programme had been fixed, the new members sworn in, a report had been agreed upon to be sent to the head of the district—not by post, as that was dangerous,—a commercial traveller would take charge of it, and pass it on from hand to hand until its destination was reached. The commercial travellers were a perfect godsend, and formed a network of useful and trustworthy means of communication all over the theatre of the rebellion. The district 'centre,' when the cabalistic sheet of blue paper reached his hands, read it and sent it to another, and he in turn sent it to a public-house in Dublin, whence in course of time it would find its way to the Castle, to perplex and frighten Her Majesty's dignitaries there.

Fenlon repeated his injunctions as to the barrels filled with guns. Godfrey asked him timidly if he might come and take one.

'If you have a way of hiding it at home, yes,' replied Fenlon yawning, 'why not? only take care no one sees you with it.'

The party dispersed shortly after this. Fenlon emptied the guttering remnant of the home-made tallow candles on to the ground and stamped out the flame. Godfrey, as he left the yard last of all, saw him enter the dwelling-house with the paraffin lamp held in one hand and a bundle of loose sheets of paper under his arm. The sole member of the company who remained behind was the donkey, now nearly invisible among the clouds of tobacco smoke.

Most of the men took a cross route over the fields. Jim Cadogan and Godfrey held along together, Godfrey in silence, as excited as at first. He felt the sovereign in his pocket like a sort of sacred trust. The Commodore walked off fast with a couple of Barrettstown men. There was little love lost between him and Cadogan; each was furiously jealous of the other, and several times during the evening's meeting there had been sparring between them. The ex-federal soldier was some ten years older than Cadogan, which when joined to his unquestioned experience, gave him of course the advantage. Cadogan drew God-

frey's arm within his, and made him loiter purposely to allow the rest to pass on.

'I hate the sight of that fellow,' said he, 'with his bragging and dictating. I never can make out what he and Langan have so much to do together'—Langan was the national schoolmaster. 'Faith, if Father Paul comes to know where Langan spends his evenings he'll be sacked. It was they wrote and sent old Brown the threatening letter to Lees Castle.'

'Was it?' said Godfrey astonished; 'I thought it came from the gardener whom Brown had dismissed.'

'Well, that's true enough; but you see Brown would know the gardener's writing, so he got Langan to do it.'

'And four extra police brought into the place—haven't the people to pay tax for those?'

'Well, sure isn't it all for the cause? Don't we all have to sacrifice something? Look at yourself, if they took you now with treasonable documents on you, sure, man, you would be in for ten years' penal servitude at least, and I for being with you.'

Godfrey only tossed his head.

'Tell me, Cadogan, about young Quin, you knew him in Dublin. What sort of fellow is he? Does he belong to us?'

'Pah—George Quin—the meanest creature that ever stood! I would not—not if all this world and the next depended upon it—be as mean as George Quin. Why, would you believe it?—I don't think he ever paid for a drink for any one in his life. No, he'll take all he can get. I've met him out night after night with fellows, and I suppose he had twenty times the money any one of us had—and would he stand a drink? Peter Quin will die rich, but his son George will be richer than him still—the closest-fisted creature in this world!'

'I suppose he will soon be a barrister now.'

'Not he! has two years more of it yet. He'll set up in Dublin then, and his ugly sister with him there—to get her a professional gentleman for all her money. Well, with all her money and twice as much I would not marry that girl.'

'I should like to see Dublin,' said Godfrey dreamily.

'Bah! I should like to see London—that's the place! Lord! sure it isn't *living* we are here—vegetating, rotting imbeciles that all of us are. Look at the money that belongs to us carried off out of the country and spent out of it. Look at these priests taking sides with our oppressors.'

'Not Father Paul,' returned Godfrey promptly.

'Well, I didn't mean any offence. But you know as well as I do he's against us Fenians. Siding with Protestants. Faith, that's a queer sight! The priests ought one and all to have joined us in the beginning. Not that alone, but they have set all the women up against us. My mother and sister are never done whining over me since the Bishop spoke against the rebellion.'

'They will come round once we succeed. Cadogan, are you going back to Dublin?'

'I can't pass. I've given up reading—in fact, I don't mind telling you, I pledged the books. Ah! where's the good of it? where's the good of anything? Better be born with a millstone round your neck than be born a Roman Catholic, sneered at and looked down upon by any member of the ascendancy, and those Trinity College boys. I used to see them at hospital in the mornings. Brown's nephew that was here fishing last year, he's one of them. But just wait! Pack of upstarts! See if we don't pay them off!'

The chill night air had evidently affected Cadogan's head—never too strong. 'Look at Folliot below there,—a congregation of about twenty, and paid eight or nine hundred a year, and Father Paul paid nothing—only what he can make out for himself from the people. I'm not saying Folliot isn't a good fellow, and really good to the poor; but why does he draw all that money and Father Paul having to live on charity? He would not take pay like Folliot, I'm sure; but it is an insult to him and us all the same. Not, indeed, that I believe more in one of them than the other.' The young man made haste to add this disclaimer; he would have been very sorry to be less

advanced than the Commodore, who had brought home revolutionary ideas from his travels. 'What's a priest more than any other man? Why do they dictate to us? Folliot does not dictate to the Protestants.'

'Because,' answered Godfrey, 'we have to obey them; they are different from Folliot.'

'Where? How? Why have we to obey them? We are ignorant, that's why; it's the English that have made us so, and would like to keep us so; and the priests help them out in that! Take Father Paul—didn't he make my mother send me first of all to St. Aloysius and after that to the Catholic University?'

'What of that? demanded Godfrey, a little truculently.

'I'm not saying a word against his reverence. I'm only showing you the way he rules, and isn't St. Aloysius nothing at all but a school for training young priests, with a boarding-school and day-school attached, just to boil the pot? They make a hand of us all through, and here now they are praying against the cause every Sunday—taking sides with the Government against us.'

'If you did not work, Cadogan,' said Godfrey, 'it was your own fault. I hate books and I will not study; but I am not going to blame Father Paul for that—— Hillo! what's this?'

This was Tony Devoy, fast asleep on the ditch-side. He had gone on with the van of the party, but all his companions had one by one taken to the fields, preferring to get home by back ways. So he had sat down to wait for Cadogan rather than pursue his road alone.

'Isn't that an unconscionable fool, to fall asleep that way?' said Cadogan. 'We must not leave him there.'

Godfrey laid hold of the semi-prostrate form, and gave it a shake. 'Devoy, Devoy! wake up, come along; we'll see you home.'

Cadogan assisting him, they roused the sleeper, not without difficulty, and got him on his feet.

'God bless you,' he muttered, rubbing his eyes. 'I'd have cotched me death surely. Dear, oh dear, and I so close to home, to go fall asleep dere.'

'Molly'll give it you, Tony,' said Cadogan. 'Hurry along man, now. What made you sit down there at all, and you not knowing who'd find you? Why, you might be robbed easy enough.'

'Robbed! Haw, haw!' Devoy laughed slowly. 'They'd be clever that would rob me; it would take a fairish at laste to do that.'

'How could a fairy do it?' asked Godfrey.

'Eh, I dunno; stale me away wid dem, an' take years off my life. Lard, Mr. Maulever, don't talk of de good people dis hour of de night whatever. Whisht! look at the dust-cloud coming up. You don't know but dey's in that!'

Godfrey and Jim Cadogan burst out laughing in chorus. 'You may laugh,' continued Devoy; 'it is all very well, but I tell you 'tis thrue, and look there at Dominie Kelly's child—'twas changed for them so it was. That I know an' I saw, for dey lives de very house next to my own.'

'Tell us that, Tony,' said Jim Cadogan.

'Dat last child Mary Kelly had, it was no good at all—cried day and night, and Peggy Feelan de nurse she came and looked at it, an' she tol' them some windy day to lay de child on the shovel and just put it on de dung-heap, at twelve o'clock midday, an' shut de house door and not look out at all, but just wait, and den de first gust of wind come by the fairishes would take back their own an' leave Kelly's child.'

'And did the Kellys do that?' asked Godfrey.

'Faith, sir, did they—no lie at all—got back their own child.'

'Now, Devoy! here you are at home,' said Cadogan.

They had stopped before a tiny little brown house, like an exaggerated ant-heap, beside the roadway. It was now dark. The moon had set, but the white dust-laden road was clear enough before them. 'Don't walk on the children, nor waken Molly, I advise you. Look here, Godfrey, let's light a match and hold it at the door. He'll never see his way, if you don't.'

They accompanied Devoy to his door, which he opened

easily enough, and bent himself almost double to pass in. Jim Cadogan stooped, holding the blazing match in his hands, and held it at arm's length so as to illumine, for a passing moment, the interior of the cabin. It was enough to show what there was of Tony's domestic establishment. A tiny heap of ashes at one end marked the fireplace; beside this was stacked a heap of turf; a little old deal table occupied the middle of the uneven clay-floor; one three-legged stool and a block of wood composed with this the entire furniture. A confused mass was perceptible in the corner opposite the heap of turf and beside the fire. This was the family sleeping-place, a heap of dried heather, some straw, and at the bottom a layer of broken turf-mould. Bedclothes there were none; a couple of old sacks covered the little children.

'Now, Tony! don't step on any of the children,' said Jim Cadogan. 'Good-night!' he added, as the match went out, leaving the little cabin in Cimmerian darkness. He rejoined Godfrey, who had remained on the roadways.

'Devoys is a good fellow,' said Cadogan, 'one of the best of them hereabouts. Marchmont offered him twenty pounds to emigrate with not long ago. He wants to rout out all these outlying cabins; you see, O'Malley has to pay rates on them, and it's cheaper to pull them down and emigrate the people. That's all they think of. They want the land for feeding cattle for the English market, so they drive out everybody. They refused to budge.'

'What rent does he pay?'

'Three pounds a year for the cabin and that little garden behind it. Sure, all that bog of Knockstuart could be reclaimed and made into land if the people only had their way of it. Look at the miles and miles of it that could give a comfortable living to the poor, and nothing on it but snipe and cranes. Aren't the river-side lanes of Barrctis-town full of people O'Malley has driven off the land? Never mind, we'll soon see him driven off in his turn fast enough, and every one will come by his own then.'

They had reached the upper bridge now. Godfrey was

to cross it and take the right-hand turn up the river to the Fir House.

'I must cross too,' said Cadogan, 'I am afraid to go in by the Dublin Road. I'll go round about backwards by the lowest bridge, and get over my mother's end wall. You can never tell who'll be about the street at night.'

They crossed the bridge in silence, and separated as soon as the opposite side was reached, each took his way homeward. Hardly had they turned when a man's head and shoulders rose over the bank of the river, which was steeper at the bridge than elsewhere, and watched them carefully. He noted Godfrey's destination; then, as soon as Jim Cadogan's form had vanished in the dark, he leaped up from his hiding-place, and keeping in the shadow of the willows which bordered the roadway, followed him closely. He only wanted to see what route he took homewards.

CHAPTER VIII

‘Why have you stolen upon us thus . . . ?
. . . We should have met you by sea and land
Supplying every stage with an augmented greeting.’

‘ROUGH passage, rather,’ said a big, heavily-bearded man to one of the ship’s officers of the Ulster mail-boat, just as the ship began to make the turn at the harbour-mouth in order to run in straight to her berth.

It was a wild afternoon in the end of April. An easterly wind was blowing pretty strongly, and drove the waves in tumultuous processions before it, flinging them on the rocky beaches of the coast in wild tornadoes, and thundering among the loose stones on the back of the east pier. Spray was flying everywhere ; the deck was all wet, and the ship’s officer had on his tarpaulin.

‘Oh ! nothing much this,’ he replied. ‘Had it much worse the night before last.’ Then he moved off to the side to watch the line the steamer was to take.

The big man stuck his hands in the pockets of his furred greatcoat, and walked to the ladder, by which he descended to the lower deck where the ladies’ cabin was. He entered the saloon and knocked at the door of one of the deck cabins.

‘My lady will be ready directly, sir,’ replied a querulous voice.

‘Er—er—Bingham, come here for one second,’ murmured the gentleman.

The door of the state cabin opened, and a very pale, cross *femme de chambre* stepped out, giving ingress to her

master, who stepped in and shut the door. He sat down on the sofa opposite the one on which his wife was half-reclining.

'Blanche, my love! you have been very ill, I fear. How pale you are! Are you cold? Have you been properly wrapped up? Are you better?'

The object of these tender inquiries, Lady Blanche O'Malley, was fully dressed and leaning with closed eyes against the back of the sofa. Her dressing-case was open beside her, where the maid, who had been busy putting back all the *flacons* and other comforts in their places, had left it when disturbed by her master. She had been very ill and was deathly pale, with a very drawn look about her eyes and mouth. It was rather a sweet face, if a little sad and discontented of expression. She was a few years older than Tighe O'Malley, and ill-health made her seem older than she was.

'Thank you, dear! Yes, oh yes, I am better! We are at the pier now, are we not?'

'Just coming up to it, Blanche!' said Tighe, fixing his large round eyes on hers. He took hold of his beard in one hand meditatively. Ill as she was, she divined that something was coming.

'Er—I—er—have been thinking you had better remain in Dublin until the mid-day train to-morrow. For that matter stay another, a second night at the Bilton.'

'Oh!' she said, without raising her eyes.

'Yes! I shall go on by the morning mail, *alone*.' He emphasised the words. 'You see, the country is in a very excited state.' He paused a moment and began lifting the little crystal *flacons* in and out of their places in her dressing-bag. 'I should like to see Marchmont and the new sub-inspector of constabulary first, you see. One would hardly like Courthope and Ida to alight from the train into the middle of an Irish row. One cannot tell what may be on foot, eh?'

For a moment a look of alarm and surprise passed over Lady Blanche's face. Then a glance at him having reassured her, she replied simply, having closed her eyes

again, 'As you like, dear! I shall not be sorry to have a quiet day's rest in town.'

This was the *mot d'ordre*.

'Yes, that is quite right. You are too tired, quite too tired to go on. Oh, Ida! here you are. I hope you have not been ill. Blanche has had such a bad journey. On the whole I have been thinking she had better rest to-morrow in Dublin, perhaps longer, with you and Courthope, and I'll run on in the morning with the heavy baggage and the servants, and look about me—have things ready, you know. I shall leave Vickers with you, Blanche. Brown is such an idiot. Bingham has never been in Ireland before—has she?—so Vickers will do all that's needful. As Courthope has not brought a man, you may want one in addition to Brown. To be sure, there's Chichele's.'

Vickers was his English valet, Brown a footman of Lady Blanche's.

'Can you do without Vickers?' inquired the person addressed as Ida. She was a fair woman of about thirty-four, thickly veiled and wrapped, but not so much as to hide a very fine showy figure. She spoke to Tighe O'Malley, and there was a shade of ironical meaning in her voice. Lady Blanche's people all liked Tighe immensely—it was impossible not to like him—but they had not adopted the son of the Roscommon squire quite so completely as he had them. To the most outlying cousinships Tighe claimed the kindred of the noble MacAnalleys.

'Am I not capable of any service for you?' Tighe rarely spoke seriously to a woman. His tone was always a medley of gallantry and chaff, rapidly passing on the smallest provocation to one of tender adoration streaked with sentiment, which, coupled with a fine presence, large dark eyes, and a reputation for fastness, made him, according to report, quite irresistible. He was perpetually in love with some one, and liked his wife best of all; extravagant in some things, in others parsimonious; fond of display and effect, no one could call him consistent, or anything indeed but a charming fellow, which he undoubtedly was.

Mr. Courthope, a clean-shaved, colourless-looking man,

of quiet manner, had made his appearance from the gentlemen's cabin, accompanied by a tall, very young man, so muffled up that nothing was to be seen but his nose and eyes.

'Had we not better get on shore?' he asked. 'They are all getting into the train.'

'Do not hurry, my dear fellow,' answered Tighe. 'I engaged a compartment. Just allow the mob to pass on first.'

They ascended the ladder to the upper deck. Most of the passengers were on the pier getting themselves stowed in the train which was drawn up alongside the boat. Tighe looked round him, noting familiar features—the gray mass of buildings sloping down to the harbour—the wide arms of the piers stretching out behind—the man-of-war lying, a black shadow, in front of all. A few grimy colliers, a grain ship, and half a dozen fishing luggers, formed the sole contents of the harbour. The yacht-club wore a deserted aspect. There was no one about on the shore. Everything had a shrivelled, perished look, like the countenances of the denizens of the steamer jetty.

Tighe gave the word to move now, and the party took their places in a reserved compartment, attended to the door by their *valetaille* carrying the minor luggage.

'Chichele, dear boy! You have made a bad passage,' exclaimed Mrs. Courthope, addressing herself to the young man, who was her brother.

'Do not recall bygone horrors,' he replied. 'I am much more concerned about my "gamp," my new "gamp" that I bought especially for this Irish tour. I believe I have left it on board.'

'No, no! I think I strapped it up,' said Mr. Courthope.

They were running up to Dublin now at express rate, and a reasonable interval saw the party, with the exception of Lady Blanche, who had retired to bed with a *migraine*, sitting at dinner.

'You know, Courthope, that I am going on in the morning alone. Blanche must not move—no, and I have had letters from Marchmont and the er—other people. I had better run on alone.'

'Eh—ah—um! Why, I thought you were going to give us a state entry, O'Malley? Haven't you been seven years absent, eh? Lor'!' pursued Mr. Courthope, who observed Tighe's candid face express discomfiture, 'I had imagined a torchlight procession and illuminations.'

'Sorry to seem inhospitable, my dear boy, but you know assemblages of all kinds are *suspect* just now. I believe my people are devoted to me. Marchmont, who is a thorough good fellow, has in this very letter expressed his regrets to me that he has been obliged to throw cold water upon—er—some—er—project of a deputation and address. I mean to telegraph first thing in the morning that I should not allow such a thing on any account. Hand me the claret, please.'

'You go down early, you say,' observed Chichele. 'Could you recommend me a good place for some line—light line?'

Tighe named a shop hastily, and went on, having first replenished his glass.

'Moreover Brown of Lees Castle is under protection, and so is Fredbury—do you know him, Lord Fredbury? Well, I'm not! At least,' added Tighe modestly, 'not yet; and as we are all old friends, I think it would be wiser—er—you understand—not to have any manifestations, which might be turned to account against them.'

'Yes,' assented Mr. Courthope, who did not in the least understand how one man's affairs could react upon his neighbours. However, London was twelve hours distant, and he had made up his mind to be surprised.

'If we don't go down to-morrow, I half think of calling on ——,' naming a Liberal member for Dublin city. 'Have you any idea where he is to be found?'

'I know nothing of Dublin people,' replied the county magnate grandiosely, 'but the directory will tell you in a minute.'

* * * * *

Tighe O'Malley had been spending too much money ever since his marriage, and now, driven by necessity, intended to pass some time in Ireland; so it was, that with

an army of servants and luggage he took his departure by the morning mail from Kingsbridge the next day. He felt greatly relieved to be alone. He would arrive quietly and drive home with Marchmont in his dog-cart. Courthope evidently thought there ought to be a turn-out of the tenantry and retainers, speeches, Heaven knows what, an ox roasted whole—Tighe breathed a sigh of relief, thinking to himself what a vastly different reception Captain Marchmont's letter foreshadowed.

Tighe O'Malley, in the years that had elapsed since he had inherited Barrettstown, had not lived exactly the life of a recluse or an ascetic. The disappearance of the Maul-everers' claims to the estate had been followed by a wild burst of joyful celebration on his part. The risk he had run sweetened the savour of certain ownership and gave a double zest to enjoyment. He had splendid health, loved an out-door life best of all, though he deliberately chose to play the man of fashion in London, and had a huge and insatiable love of pleasure in every shape and form. He had robust spirits, and was pre-eminently good-natured and obliging. His relative, by adoption, Mr. Courthope, and some others of his stamp, regarded their good-looking connection as a very ignorant half-educated man. Tighe repaid the compliment by holding them prigs. 'Give me life!' he used to say, 'not books';—he certainly was better company than the member of Parliament. His vivacity was infectious, his easy, simple vanity blunted all shafts of ridicule, and disarmed envy itself. The luxuries and elegance of his new life, although he had now been so long in possession of them, were appreciated as keenly as in the first few years of sweet possession, when he found himself promoted from two hundred a year, very irregularly paid, to a fine landed estate. At no period of his existence had Tighe ever been discontented, and even now it came to him—on certain fine August or September days, when out shooting on the moors, if he had got out of sight of his party—to recall, and not without feeling, days long gone by, when with a wretched old muzzle-loader 'able to shoot round a corner,' and a tatterdemalion *aide-de-camp*, he had

tramped miles and miles on the Roscommon heaths, banging indiscriminately at everything in feathers that his old red setter put up. Tighe was in no way sentimental or poetical, but there sometimes rose before his eyes, amidst the rugged picturesqueness of Highland corry or the billowy heights of Yorkshire moor, a vision of a broad far-reaching expanse of red and purple-shaded bog, broken here and there in the turf-cuttings by glistening patches of water. A damp warm breath, richly scented from the wild bog-myrtle and meadow-sweet, seemed once more to caress his face, and the familiar cry of the green plover or the plaint of the curlew sounded again in his ears. How sweet and wild that all was, and he thought of the pleasure with which he turned out his pockets at night. Their heterogenous contents were a vastly more delightful object of contemplation than the big bags of these latter days, and the newspaper paragraphs which recorded his prowess.

He was now running down in the Cork express, Lady Blanche having obliged him in the matter of not being well enough to travel. He had wrapped himself up in his fur coat, but was soon glad to take it off and sit upon it, the springs of the railway cushion being excessively obvious. He had the compartment all to himself, so he lighted a cigar, took out a novel and the morning paper. The column headed 'The State of the Country,' was not cheerful reading—seizures of arms, midnight drillings, raids for arms, arrival of Americans at Cork. The paper bristled with the like. He tossed it to one side shortly, frowned, and taking out his agent's last letter, which had been waiting for him at the Bilton, set to peruse it once more.

'I shall drive over to meet you, and since you wish it, will not bring any police. You can telegraph at the last moment what train you wish me to meet, for I prefer not to allow anything to be known of my movements beforehand. This district of the country is, I may say, wholly disaffected. Every farmer, with a few exceptions among the old men, is a sworn rebel, the sons without exception, and nearly all the labourers. I can't exactly make out about the shopkeepers, and Lethbridge declines to give

me any information. However, from this you are free to infer that his knowledge of these on-goings is not far to seek. I think before leaving Dublin you ought to go to the Castle and ask for extra police. Lord Fredbury and Brown of Lees Castle are both guarded, so is Colonel Deltane. It would take a great weight off people's minds. Lethbridge is very anxious you should have a guard. Lady Blanche will feel much safer also. However, the worst of the winter is over, and we are likely—as this is the busy season now, spring work and turf-cutting, etc., being well in,—to have a respite from active operations, but it has been an unpleasant and anxious winter to every one here.'

'Always the same,' grunted the landlord, crumpling up the letter and stuffing it into his breast pocket, 'always exaggerating the difficulties of his position, the dangers he incurs—as if he were not paid for it all.'

Tighe felt aggrieved and angry for a moment, for he considered himself to have acted very generously to his agent in the matter of a rather nice house and grounds, which he was allowed to hold at a cheaper rent than they were worth, that is to say, than they would have fetched if offered for competition. Captain Marchmont, who was English and knew the value of houses in English country towns, considered that he paid three times more than he had any right to, considering the wretched way in which the house was built and planned.

They reached the junction at last, and on the platform, which was crowded with constabulary and sullen-looking country people, he recognised some neighbours.

'Glad to see you back, O'Malley! Lady Blanche coming down to-morrow, eh? She does well to remain a day or two in town. I will promise her she gets enough of North Cork before she is much older.'

'Well, Brown, I am glad to see you looking so well,' responded O'Malley, ignoring the reference to his wife. 'Things are pretty lively down here. What a lot of police about!'

'I have four guarding me—living in the house,' returned Mr. Brown of Lees Castle very pompously.

'You threatened?' asked O'Malley, in an incredulous tone.

'Threatened?' echoed the other, 'why I have had hairbreadth escapes! I was fired at once, at least they fired at some one in mistake for me.'

Tighe smothered a laugh at this hairbreadth escape. 'Oh, come now! I can't believe that, you know! I think this whole business is rather a plant, a put-up job.'

'You do? I wonder if Fitz Henry of Lestertown thinks so—in his grave, poor fellow. They sent him there in no put-up job fashion, for him at least; shot him dead in his own lawn, only a month ago!'

'Oh! he was a brute, anyhow,' remarked Tighe, between two exhalations of smoke.

'Oh well! come! if we are to be murdered for——'

'There's my train,' ejaculated Tighe, in the nick of time. 'Good-bye, Brown. Lady Blanche will be expecting you and Mrs. Brown over to call directly—now don't forget us! bye, bye! *au revoir!*'

He added this totally unnecessary request as a sort of compensatory offering for having shut up the old bore in the peremptory manner he did. He thought as he settled himself in the carriage of the branch train how angry his wife would be if she could have heard him. Mrs. Brown was a newcomer in the county, and rather on the fringe of than actually in county society. She also was a bore, Evangelical and given to 'swaddling,' *i.e.* converting the Roman Catholics. Lady Blanche was High Church for one thing, and for another could never bring herself to run the risk of hurting any one's feelings by even hinting that his or her religious tenets were incorrect. However, Tighe reflected, Blanche was able to take care of herself well enough. So he dismissed the subject from his mind, and looking out of window at the landscape, remarked how far advanced the spring was, compared with London. Great red wastes of bog extended on both sides of the line for miles, the black pools of water showed here and there fresh green selvages, and an occasional birch tree had broken into pale transparent foliage. The hedges of the railway bank were just suffused

with a delicate flush of growth among the brown netting of the thorn branches. Sea-gulls now and again, more frequently flocks of white geese, marked the brown reaches of the vast, extending plain, barren of all other token of life. Only at rare intervals a cabin met his eye. White undulating roads stretching out like a ribbon unrolled, with a deep fringe of ragged green on each side, led away from the little railway stations.

Before long the stopping-place for Barrettstown was reached. Tighe leaned out of the window, and spied soon enough his agent's neat dog-cart standing outside the station. Captain Marchmont was waiting on the platform, a lean, gray, neutral-tinted looking personage of evidently military antecedents.

'How do you do, Marchmont?' 'Glad to see you back, O'Malley!' were the greetings exchanged, rather curtly on the landlord's side.

'What sort of passage did you have?'

'Oh, all right! I don't mind the sea. Lady Blanche was rather knocked up. On the whole it is as well, all things considered, that we did not all come down together. What are these "peelers" hanging about here for? Morrow, Kelly, how are you all?' This last was addressed to the station-master, who approached him with a beaming countenance, intended to signify joy at his arrival.

'Finely, sir, thank your honour. I hope your honour's well and her ladyship's honour too! Will I be putting the trunks on the car, or will your honour send the cart over?'

'Send them all on as fast as you can, Kelly,' said Captain Marchmont, 'by car. You want to know what the police are here for?'

They were getting into the dog-cart now. Captain Marchmont was silent until they had turned the horse's head and were started on their homeward route.

'They are down here,' he resumed, 'to look for some barrels of American flour which are stuffed with guns. They are losing their time, I surmise, as usual. Those guns, I have not a doubt, are distributed long ago all over the country.'

'What makes you say that? What grounds have you to go upon?'

'Past experience; it happened before, will happen again. I infer that it has already happened in this instance. Besides, I distrust the source from which Lethbridge and Brown obtained their information.'

'Brown is an old alarmist. I may tell you candidly, Marchmont, I believe this whole business is half a plant.'

'Maybe so. I confess there is a deal of humbug in it on *their* side. The drills are not attended over zealously, and the money does not come in nearly so well as at the beginning.'

'What, then, is the fuss about? I detest above all things—er—much ado about nothing.'

'Just this. This district alone can muster over three hundred able-bodied rebels. Suppose they rise one night and cut off outlying inhabitants, raid for arms, and burn the houses, how could we get soldiers over in time? And how could this small body of police act over a radius of say forty miles roundabout?'

'Pooh! Marchmont, leave hypotheses aside! No use raising bogies. You see for yourself.' Tighe changed his tone completely from a scoffing to a confidential one. 'I don't like this look of things before—er—strangers coming to Ireland for the first time. I begin to think, you know, that it is almost risking their lives, and ladies also—it is—er—er—'

'Whew!' thought the agent. 'Is he going to sell the estate? There is something in the wind.' However he listened attentively.

'Not that alone,' continued Tighe, his voice now assuming semi-angry, semi-reproving sound, 'but Mr. Courthope is a Liberal—one of Gladstone's followers, a man of great influence and weight. I have heard of his writing in the *Times*. By Jove! in fact if he is given a pessimistic view of affairs there's no telling what the consequences may be!' Captain Marchmont was silent, listening not so much to what O'Malley was saying with wrathful emphasis, as revolving in his own mind the contingency of a change of

dynasty. The entail ended with Tighe; he could sell, or do what he liked with the estate. What a bad time to sell! He must be heavily hit this time surely, if he meditated such a step.

'That is to be thought of, no doubt,' he observed, when O'Malley had stopped speaking, rather drily. A vision of the heavy cart-load of luggage passed before his recollection—that did not look like selling. The town-house in Lowndes Square was to be let for the season. 'Pooh!' thought the agent, 'it is just to throw dust in the visitors' eyes—wants to pose as something or other. I ought to know him by this time.'

CHAPTER IX

‘ No matter

What side a man adopts, or of what subject,
If he has but a tongue, he'll not want reasons
To prove him in the right, as now, for instance.’

LADY BLANCHE and her kinswoman Mrs. Courthope and the brother of the last-named, who was an Oxford undergraduate, were all sitting in the drawing-room of Barrettstown. They had arrived from Dublin by the morning mail, which had started at nine. Lady Blanche was lying on the sofa. Lunch was over, Mrs. Courthope was moving about restlessly. It was a large square room, heavily and gorgeously decorated ; but the gilding had the subdued look that comes of damp, and the books in the long low shelves that ran round the room had a mouldy smell when opened, and their pages were all speckled with mildew. There were round bays in the walls with three windows in each. One of these windows had been lowered to the floor so as to form a sort of door opening on the terrace without. This was one of Tighe's improvements, and was utterly out of keeping with the general style of the room. The ceiling was of beautifully tinted plaster-work, but the colours had all gone except here and there a bit of the gilding which caught the light. Well-dried and aired as the rooms had been, the faintest musty odour hung about still, and not even the great pots of spring flowers and the growing violets with which the *jardinières* were filled could altogether drive it out or stifle it.

‘ Well ! ’ said Mrs. Courthope, speaking from one of the bay windows in which she had taken her stand, ‘ and

this is Ireland? I have been dying to come and see it for years, you know, and here I am at last! How lovely this looks! I must open this door, Blanche. You will not mind?'

She never waited to get Lady Blanche's answer, which was prompt enough, but opened the window and stepped out on the terrace. It was a beautiful April afternoon. One of those warm soft showers, peculiar to the South, had just passed over the garden, leaving the whole place sown with jewels. The yellow and purple crocuses in the pastures at her feet glistened with a newly-aspersed lustre. The young leaves drank up the moisture as with their breath. The hyacinth-bells let fall the heavy drops, and with them their richest odour into the ground, which gave back the perfume a hundredfold. The blackbirds and thrushes were to be heard from the shrubberies below in a loud chorus.

'How delicious! we are almost at the end of April—a real burst of spring—a poet's spring at last—no east wind—and what a view you have! That is the river. How lovely it looks among the trees! Of course, I remember the photograph of Barrettsdown that you had in Lowndes Square.'

'Now, Ida, I command you to come and sit down. Think of the journey you have had! Here is the tea.'

'Delightful! is it not, Chichele?' The young man had left his chair and strolled across to the window.

'Yes,' he said. 'I shall go and have a look at the river. It was too bad of Tighe and Jack to leave me at home.'

'Dear Chichele! how uncomplimentary to Blanche and your poor sister!'

'Come and have some tea, dear, and I'll forgive you,' said Lady Blanche gently.

'No tea, thank you, but let me do that.' He crossed over and helped her with some disposition of her tea equipage, then passed lightly into the hall for a hat and cane, and before long Mrs. Courthope saw his slim graceful figure passing down the avenue; she looked after him for a few

minutes in silence, then she closed the window and went over to the sofa in front of the fire.

'He looks stronger, does he not, Blanche?'

'Chichele? oh yes! and he is beginning now to lose that very boyish look, almost seraphic it was. I often think it a pity a boy should be so very handsome as he was. It was really delightful to look at him—is still, but it is different.'

'Yes, he is quite the young man now,' assented his sister.

'He is twenty-one.'

'Is he thinking of the Guards still, now that he is about to leave Oxford?'

'I fancy not. You see, Uncle Ansdale has behaved so handsomely to him. He had an allowance of fifteen hundred provided for him ever since he left Eton, and now he has settled five thousand a year upon him, and he has the Down Street house.'

'Where is Lord Ansdale now?'

'San Remo. You see, he can't stand the cold springs, ever since he had that illness three years ago. He is so wrapped up in Chichele—wants him to stand for Parliament. It was his pressure that made Chichele go to Christ Church. He wanted to enter the Guards.'

'He is the *beau ideal* of a Guardsman rather than a senator,' said Lady Blanche musingly; 'but he is clever enough for anything,' she made haste to add, dreading, Irish-like, to have uttered anything displeasing.

'He is so warm-hearted and affectionate,' said Mrs. Courthope. 'Chichele would do anything for me—anything in the world!'

Then there was silence, broken only by the snoring or fidgeting of Lady Blanche's dogs, or the measured discreet tick of a tiny clock, hidden somewhere among the china things in the chimney-piece.

'Well, fancy! I have been two days in Ireland, two whole days, and I have not seen anything wonderful yet. This is Thursday, and Tuesday we dined with the Warminsters and——'

'And here you are on Thursday, among the bogs and

the wild Irish already,' supplied Lady Blanche, half satirically.

'Well! so far I can't see much that is new or strange. To be sure those bogs were quite peculiar—such bareness, and the strange red colour, and the utter absence of trees; I noticed that, but then you have plenty here. Quite a lovely drive,—recalls Moresden Hall.'

'Ah!' sighed Lady Blanche, 'dear Moresden!'

'Do you hate Ireland as much as ever?'

'Ida, my dear!' remonstrated Lady Blanche, 'one never hates one's own place.'

'Well, I don't know, I don't think I love Suffolk; but after all, of course, people's places are all pretty well alike everywhere.'

She glanced round the drawing-room as she spoke. The flames of the logs glanced back off the gilding. The warmth drew out all the faint delicate odour of the flowers, chiefly cinerarias and primroses. Lady Blanche could not endure a strong perfume. At the end of the room, in front of a tall pier glass, was a mass of trumpet lilies. The mirror behind reflected all the waxen blossoms and shield-like leaves in a great mass. The maids had unpacked and spread about Lady Blanche's pretty things, her ormolu and silver writing things, her favourite books, cushions, and photo-cases. Mrs. Courthope found nothing odd or out of the way, although she wished to do so.

'Tell me,' she said presently, 'is there any old china or carved oak things to be picked up in the cottages hereabouts?'

'China! carved oak!' Lady Blanche sat up straight, and looked at her visitor with wondering eyes. 'Ida! you are in Cork, on the borders of Kerry and Limerick, in the most savage——' she stopped suddenly; 'why do you forget, and fancy you are in Belgium or Flanders?'

'Savage!' repeated Mrs. Courthope astonished, for Lady Blanche had evidently spoken unguardedly.

'Oh well, that is not exactly the word—but, they have nothing of *that* sort, my dear.' Then she began to laugh as if amused by the ludicrousness of the idea.

'Why not? I know some of the best carved wood that

you could wish for is to be had in the farmhouses in the north of England, and as for china, you'll get Chelsea, and Coalportdale, and Derby, and as for Spode, I have really found shelves full of that alone.'

'Well, I will simply undertake to say that you will not find a single thing of the sort in any Irish farmhouse, especially in the South.'

'Yet, don't you find exquisite lace here?'

'Find it? they make it in certain districts, but you might as well expect to find a dressmaker's apprentice wearing the apparel of a duchess, because she has helped to make it, as find the Irish lacemaker wearing lace.'

Mrs. Courthope was silent for a minute.

'Blanche! you must take me to see some of those cabins; some of your farmhouses also.'

'Oh yes, to be sure.' This was rather faint.

'I have always been told the children are so pretty; have such lovely eyes. You have a school, of course.'

'I have nothing of the kind, of course! My dear Ida, you must be dreaming. You really do not understand how careful and guarded we must be. The school is the last thing in the world we could venture to touch. How could you imagine such folly? The entire population here is Roman Catholic; the priests would not allow us to interfere with them in any way.'

Mrs. Courthope stared at her.

'Please ring for me, dear; you are close to the bell. Finney,' she said to the footman, 'take away the tea-things, and bring in fresh tea as soon as the gentlemen return. The priests will allow us to do nothing. It is of no use attempting to improve the Irish.'

'Then you are not on good terms with your priests here?' asked Mrs. Courthope.

'Terms? Oh! as to that—they are not persons of a class one could have anything to do with. Father Paul, as they call him, is rather one of the better sort—he was educated abroad—but the others are—oh!' an eloquent movement of the eyebrows and nose conveyed Lady Blanche's meaning better than words.

The footman, who was a native of Barrettstown and a Roman Catholic, noted this expression of face and translated it into words of the most unequivocal sort when he related to his fellows in Barrettstown her ladyship's comments on the clergy.

'Utterly impossible to *show* the least interest in them whatever you may *feel*.'

'What an extraordinary thing to say of your own people, your own tenants and dependants!'

'My dear Ida, I wanted to look after the school here—you know we came here after I was married. I thought of having a sewing teacher, and offering prizes for good sewing and knitting. I was warned not to do so by every one. Mrs. Brown of Lees Castle—poor woman, she has rather an unfortunate manner, don't you know?—opened a school somewhere or other about her place: Lady Fredbury was greatly amused at her doing so, and the Le Poers also. She had only just come into the county, and the—er—other inhabitants thought her just a *soupeçon*—well—inclined to show us all that in her opinion we ought to do. All went beautifully for something less than a week. After that, empty benches were the order of the day.'

'Why?'

'Oh! the parish priest simply forbade the girls to attend it. You see, she had texts hung up on the walls, and was given to that low evangelical style of doing things, converting the creatures—I always thought it in the worst possible taste.'

'You mean converting the Roman Catholics?'

'Of course. I consider it so preposterous! They never make any attempts on us. Imagine a priest taking upon himself to hand me a tract! I believe any one of them would die rather than take such a liberty as to tell me to my face that my soul was in danger.'

'But he thinks it is.'

'That is beside the question altogether. The great thing is not to interfere—to leave them to themselves. Over and above being the civil thing to do, it is the safest. Captain Marchmont told me that he never offers a hint of

any kind to one of our tenants. They may have the pigs in their rooms along with the pianos,—offer every inducement to a visitation of typhus fever, as they do perpetually—he confines himself strictly to taking the rent.'

'That would not do in England. But, as you say, I am in a foreign country. Why, I ask you, do they prefer dirt to cleanliness?'

'They do prefer it—but it is the religion—it goes with Romanism.'

'Well, if so, how is it that the French and Belgians, who are all Roman Catholics, are clean and love working?'

'There you have got beyond me, dear! I can't explain it, it is race or climate probably. Here they come!'

'The rain drove us back,' said Mr. Courthope, entering at that moment. 'Has the post come in yet?'

'No! the bag is about due,' answered Tighe. 'It has to go to Barrettstown to be sealed. I don't care for tea, thanks. Courthope, tea?'

'No tea. How it does rain!' He went over to the window, on which the shower was beating with great violence. The rain was falling so thickly that the air was quite obscured, and the 'sough' of the rising wind made itself heard distinctly.

'The blossoms will be all beaten off,' lamented Lady Blanche.

'Only a ten minutes' gust,' said Tighe, who was standing with his back to the fire. 'All the better for our chances of a fish to-morrow. With a full river such as we shall have there will be no doubt of a kill. Here comes that post-bag; Mrs. Cadogan takes her time over it.'

'Well, I am sure it is legitimately employed in her case. She is not like her predecessor, who used to read everything.'

'Read everything!' exclaimed Mrs. Courthope.

'Yes,' said Tighe. 'The kettle was boiling when the mail came in; she opened the letters with hot steam, and my *Times* used to come up smelling of pipes and porter.'

'Do you mean to say they opened a paper addressed to you?'

'Yes,' replied Tighe. 'There could be no mistake

about that. It used to smell of tobacco and porter when I took it out of the wrapper. But let me tell you how I caught them. I drove down one evening about ten minutes after the mail had come in, and just timed my descent so well that I surprised Biddy Fagan, the postmistress, with her family and connections generally, gathered round some fellow of the place, who was reading out the leading article for them.'

'What did you do?' questioned Mrs. Courthope.

'Do?' wrote instantly to the "General" and had them turned out at once.'

'*Destituted* on the spot,' added Lady Blanche; 'it was done by return of post. But now tell the sequel, Tighe.'

He laughed, 'Biddy Fagan, who if the truth were known, did not confine her curiosity to political matters—I was credibly informed that she read two-thirds of the letters that passed through her hands—at once furnished herself with a folio sheet of blue paper, got up a petition setting forth her distinguished services, unblemished character, etc., and set off round the country to get this signed and attested. Who do you think was the first person she applied to for a signature?'

'Well—who? You! you! oh never!'

'She did,' said Lady Blanche, 'and got it too—he signed it at once. Yes, you may well look amused and astonished, Ida. You will learn in time that our ways in Ireland are vastly different from—a-ah——' a sigh finished the sentence very eloquently.

'I would not have signed it,' said Courthope. 'What was the use of going through the form of punishing her?'

'Well, you do not understand the country, my dear fellow. Life here is made up of apparently empty forms, but disregard them and see where you will be.'

O'Malley leaned against the chimney-piece and showed his white teeth with a smile for an instant.

'Now to give you an instance: A rich Birmingham man took Devreux's place on the west coast of Limerick, and settled there.'

'I know the man—not at all a bad sort either. He

gave me a couple of days' magnificent sport. What a river!

'Exactly. Well it was part of the famous Barton property, and the people had some old privileges; for instance, they used to cut sedges in the loughs to roof their houses with at a certain time of the year, and there was a bridle-path over one of his mountains, a regular short cut, which saved them a couple of miles. This Birmingham fellow had no notion of allowing this; he had bought the property out and out. He said they disturbed the wild fowl by cutting the sedges, and he would not allow them to annoy the sheep with their dogs tramping over the mountains, so egad! he stopped both.'

'And then?'

'Well, after living with a loaded revolver within reach at all hours and places he had to give in at last. I don't mean give them back their privileges, but left the place.'

'Left Barton Lodge!' echoed Courthope, with a ring of regret in his voice.

'Yes; it was not half bad for a fishing billet. That sort of thing won't go down in this country. My plan is never to interfere. That Birmingham fellow—I forget his name—tried on some religious dodge with them also, meddled with the schools, offered a prize for Bible knowledge, or something of that sort; regularly insulted them. I don't believe in education for the lower orders of Irish. That's all very well in England; people who work in factories and mills are the better for being educated, perhaps; but I should imagine it a real misfortune to the poor of Ireland. No; they are infinitely better off to be ignorant. I never set foot in the school. I leave that altogether to the parish priest. I never refuse him anything he asks. Now, I gave them a site for that new chapel they have built—it is actually upon the corner of our demesne—gave him two subscriptions and a lot of wood. Oh, Father Paul is devoted to me! we are the best of friends.'

'I should so like to meet him,' said Mrs. Courthope.

'Well—er——' said O'Malley, as if startled, 'we could not ask him to dinner—ask him *here*, in fact—no.'

'No ; I told you, Ida,' repeated Lady Blanche.

'But I can't understand why that should make such a difference. In Inverness-shire last autumn, don't you recollect, Jack, the parish minister used to dine with us often, and he was the son of a smith—the Morvens' own blacksmith. Lady Morven told me so ; ever so many Scotch clergymen come from quite the lower class.'

'They do, I believe,' Tighe observed thoughtfully ; 'but they are all educated, that makes the difference.'

'How—why, are not these people educated also ?'

'They can't have a Catholic university,' said Tighe ; 'and, after all, you see it is their religion, and in fact they suit their people all the better for not being too well educated. I tell you my plan is the only one—never interfere—never meddle—respect their little prejudices and customs. I have no need of personal protection, I don't believe one of the people has the slightest ill-will to me. Of course, for the sake of the house and property, I got the police barrack built on the demesne-ground where it can command the town ; but——'

'But, my dear fellow, that—er—*sent la garrison*, it seems to me.'

'Oh ! a mere precaution in case of a night raid for arms, which, by the bye, I believe they are too wise to attempt. No, Courthope, put English ideas out of your head when you come over here. The great secret of managing the Irish is to let them alone.'

'I have been telling Ida,' said Lady Blanche, 'of a neighbour's oddities—Mrs. Lees, Brown, or Broun. If I lived for an hundred years I could not recollect her name ! Ida,' she said, 'I don't believe you know what an Evangelical is.'

'Oh yes ! I do,' retorted her cousin, 'a sort of Dissenter—they talk texts, and have them all over the place.'

'There are depths undreamt of by you, dear. Once on a time she came here to dilate to me on the iniquities of a curate, a wild kind of poor creature imported by our

dear old friend Folliot—indeed, I think he was a cousin of his own—and Mrs.—er—Lees, among many other plaintiffs, alleged that the misguided youth called the sacrament the—now! listen, Ida,—called the sacrament the *Eutachrist*, and when he was remonstrated with declared himself to be perfectly *Rubical*.'

'Blanche, you never will forgive her that,' observed Tighe.

'No, never, never!'

'Well you might, for it makes you a good story.'

'That may be, but I have not Mrs. Brown to thank for that.'

'There it is, Courthope! I tell you the people here are divided into two large classes, those who tell stories, and those of whom the stories are told. I can't make up my mind which is the larger body. I hate stories. I like good things to—er—er—transpire, as the papers say, just to happen quite spontaneously.'

'So do I,' assented Mrs. Courthope, 'to get the first of a good thing before everybody has mouthed it over. A story which has gone the rounds always appears to me *suspecte*, suggestive of back numbers of *Punch*. Tighe, do you remember the day you were going over some one's stables, and that queer coachman——?'

'Oh yes! that was in West Meath. The daughter of the house, Fanny Batty, had a pretty mare which she called after herself, Fanny; and the groom who was doing the honours thought it wasn't the thing to call this mare by so familiar a term before strangers; so—there was quite a party of us there—said he, when he wanted to show her off to us, "Get up, Miss Batty!"'

CHAPTER X

'Dost thou love pictures? he will fetch thee straight
Adonis, painted by a running brook ;
And Cytherea all in sedges hid,
Which seem to move and wanton with her breath
Even as the waving sedges play with wind.'

WHEN Chichele went out he followed an avenue which branched off the drive and wound among the trees beside the river. He walked quickly and nervously ; it suited his humour, for his head ached, and he had found the journey down in the jarring railway carriage tiring in the extreme. He had been rather out of sorts of late. He had returned from the South of Europe, where he had spent the winter since Christmas, rather too soon ; and had arrived in London to find it possessed of an east wind of more than usual unscrupulousness. He had been chilled and depressed by it, and at his sister's and Lady Blanche's request had accompanied them to Ireland, it being his first visit.

He soon passed out of sight of the house and terraces. The avenue, sheltered by a double row of fine elms, wound through a wood which had run rather wild. At the back of the stems of the firs and beeches he could see an almost impenetrable thicket of brambles ; dog-violets carpeted the ground all round the trees, and in the dim recesses behind these were quantities of primroses, which looked nearly white in the shadow. The showers which had fallen at intervals all day had brought out a moist fragrance from the earth. The budding branches of the trees perfumed the air ; every now and again as they swayed to and fro in

the gentle current of air which seemed to sweep across the landscape from east to west, clear shining drops fell to earth, glistening as they did so in the sunlight. Rabbits scurried back and forth across the gravelled drive; black-birds ran furtively and noiselessly among the undergrowth, while in the trees overhead the thrushes sang vigorously to each other, silencing the cooing of the wood-pigeons. The river was on the right hand; every now and again a steel-blue expanse shone among the branches. Presently a little footpath appeared, leading down to the water-side. He turned into this, and soon found himself beside a boat-house; it was half-ruined and all overgrown with ivy and periwinkle. A punt, half full of water, was chained to the little boat slip, which an overhanging branch of a lime-tree almost entirely concealed. He turned now and walked along the bank down stream, stepping on the roots of the trees as much as possible, for the ground was plashy and wet. He was about to return to the drive when from across the river a shrill-sounding voice broke the stillness. He was startled, and turning round looked across. An odd-looking little old woman's figure appeared in front of an entrance gate on the other side. The gates, which were wooden, were closed, but a side door through which she had come out, and which was half-buried in ivy, was open. A high-gabled wall of a house, the end of which was turned to the road, appeared above a confused mass of outhouses, one of which was evidently a mill. He was standing behind a tree, quite out of sight, and waited for a minute to see what would come next. The old woman, who, with her red shoulder shawl and bright petticoat, looked something like an English gipsy, advanced to the edge of the river, which took a sudden bend at that point, and looked up and down the bank.

'Miss Marion! Miss Ma-a-a-rion! yerra, my laws! where are you at all, at all, and his reverence sittin' widin, wid your aunt, lookin' everywhere for you, miss?'

'Is that Choctaw or is it Sandwich Island?' murmured Chichele, as he listened to the strange-sounding dialect. 'Oh! who comes here?'

A tall slender girl, who had been standing or sitting in a deep thicket of bushes a little way in from the path, pushed her way out of this, and appeared on the bank suddenly. She had a shawl over one arm; the other held a couple of books. She wore a black dress. Her face was pale, narrow, and foreign-looking. Her eyebrows were dark, her hair black and coiled in a great twist behind. He could not distinguish her features, but she was evidently quite young, sixteen or seventeen at the most.

'Kitty Macan!' she said—the words were carried distinctly across the water to Chichele's ears, and sounded a little foreign. 'I have told you repeatedly to send Peggy or Rody to look for me, and you are not to shout my name out on the high-road like that.'

'Well, den, miss!' Kitty Macan in vain expostulated. Miss cut her short with a peremptory 'I order you not to do it again!' passed her by rapidly, and stooping gracefully disappeared into the ivy-framed door. The old woman hurried after her.

'Who in the world can that be?' burst from the watcher's lips. He came from behind the tree now and made haste down the bank to the very edge of the water. 'What a curious, striking-looking creature! Foreign, surely—who and what can she be?—and so beautiful!'

Then he stood looking over at the gates with the mass of trees topped by a great fir, which reared its red trunk aloft above them all. There was nothing now but the end wall, which had no window, and the mossgrown roofs of the sheds and outhouses to look at. A sudden impulse seized him to cross over, but no bridge was visible. He remembered then that the nearest bridge was far down the river, close to the village. There was the weir, to be sure; he could see it a few yards lower, but the river was full and was tumbling over it in a way that did not invite an adventure, though at low water it might be an easy enough feat for a sure-footed person to cross by the top ledge. He remained for a few seconds standing by the water edge full of the thought of crossing somehow or other, when suddenly the absurdity of the situation flashed on his mind

and he burst out laughing. He turned round and sprang up the bank, but no sooner had he reached the path than he thought he again heard voices from the same direction. Without a moment's hesitation he turned round and made for the same point by the river edge where he had been before. It took a few minutes to reach it, and when he did so the door in the ivy was half ajar as before. There was no one to be seen but a tall old man clad in a long black coat and wearing a rusty tall hat, who was walking leisurely along the bank in the direction of the town. It did not occur to Chichele that he had come out of the mysterious house opposite, and disappointed, the young man took his way back once more, this time finally. He turned right about homewards, slowly, musing as he went on what he had just seen, and determined to find out who the inhabitants of the old house were.

It was late when he reached the hall door. He had to go to his room to dress for dinner, so he postponed his inquiries until a more favourable time.

CHAPTER XI

'Love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams
Driving back shadows over low'ring hills :
Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw love
And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.'

WHEN Chichele came down a few minutes before eight he found his sister and Lady Blanche seated before the fire. Tighe and Mr. Courthope had not yet appeared. It was half light, half dark. The evening was a clear bluish-gray, the air chilly and sweet. A turf fire burned picturesquely, casting pretty soft lights over the room.

'Well, you had a long walk, dear,' said Lady Blanche to Chichele.

'A long stroll. I can hardly say I walked. I did not go beyond the park, only to the river's edge. How lovely it is! The green is really a new revelation. I say, who are your neighbours?'

'Who are my neighbours?' she echoed.

'Yes, on the opposite side. There is a place that looks like an old dismantled mill, all ivy and moss, and that sort of thing, a mill-race, and a tumble-down house—you must know it.'

'I think I do,' she answered slowly. 'There is rather a romance connected with that place—or rather with the people who live in it. I think you had better ask Tighe about it—in fact I do not like to tell the story, for I am not sure of having its details quite clearly in my head. It really is a queer sort of affair.'

'Tighe *must* tell it,' said Mrs. Courthope, who looked interested. 'But, Chichele, what do you know about the old dismantled mill, as you call it? What has excited your curiosity?'

His sister had noted his eager manner of questioning Lady Blanche, and out of pure inquisitiveness born of ennui asked the question.

Chichele in his soul blessed her. She had shown him the need of caution. He half-closed his long dark-lashed eyes, and lay back in the chair.

'Well, it looks such a sleeping beauty in the wood or enchanted castle sort of crib, to begin with, and—er—this afternoon as I went along I saw such queer-looking wild people about there.'

'Whom did you see?' interrupted Lady Blanche abruptly,—'an old woman—or was it a boy?'

'It wasn't a boy,' drawled Mr. Ansdale deliberately, his eyes fixed on the fire. 'Yes, an—er—old woman.'

'Dear me! I thought old Miss D'Arcy was quite paralysed. Extraordinary old creature!—keeps alive by sheer force of will, I suppose.'

'Stop a moment,' said Mrs. Courthope. 'Miss D'Arcy—Miss D'Arcy! Blanche, that was the name of the extraordinary old creature who figured in that affair Tighe told us of long ago. What a romance in real life it was, to be sure!'

'It was a romance—luckily for Tighe,' remarked Lady Blanche. 'Had it been history—fact instead of fiction—affairs would have been very different.'

Chichele was listening attentively, praying that his sister would save him the trouble of asking questions, the answers to which he began to feel morbidly anxious to hear. He seemed still to see the slender black-robed figure flit past as lightly and quickly as a bird. Who she was he must know, at any cost or risk.

'Here is Tighe. Ask him now, Chichele, if you choose. Were I you I would postpone it till dinner is over.'

'Very good,' he replied; but that moment Tighe said, 'By the bye, Blanche, who do you think I saw this after-

noon as I passed the convent? one of those Mauleverers—D'Arcys—whatever they call themselves. Yes, positively! She has quite grown up—a tall girl, awfully dark, with eyes and hair like a gipsy. She was coming out of the door. She cannot be more than sixteen, or so.'

'They are still there?' questioned Lady Blanche indifferently.

'Yes, no doubt so long as the old woman is alive, they will hold together somehow. Marchmont is coming to dinner, is he not?'

That very moment Captain Marchmont and his wife were announced, and in a few minutes they paired into dinner.

'How in the world am I to talk to this female?' mused Mr. Ansdale, running a searching and not altogether admiring glance over his companion. Mrs. Marchmont's complexion bore traces of the Indian sun. Her hair was gray and thin, and her attire, compared with that of the other ladies, distinctly dowdy. She carried herself well, and her expression was intelligent, if rather depressed.

'How delightful the spring flowers are,' hazarded Chichele, apropos of a table decoration composed entirely of jonquils.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Marchmont. 'The park is full of them. Mr. O'Malley's uncle Mauleverer—whom—he succeeded him, you know—was passionately fond of them. He caused them to be planted all along the river, and narcissus, but they come later.'

'Mauleverer!' repeated Chichele to himself. He handed her salt with a positive air of *empressement*. 'Do they?' he asked. 'I don't know much about flowers, but I'm fond of them—those wild ones, as people call them, especially.'

'They remind me of the valley of the Trent,' sighed Mrs. Marchmont. 'Warwickshire, Stafford, and Derbyshire—how lovely the fields there are just now!'

'Don't they grow here—are they not, what do you call it, indigenous, eh?'

'Oh, I don't know. I am not a botanist. Godfrey

Mauleverer's wife loved them, and he stuck them in everywhere. I recollect Father Conroy taking offence one Easter—an early Easter. It used to be a custom here to send down flowers to deck the altar—she dropped her voice very low as she said this. 'Poor old Godfrey sent down a cartload of these jonquils. Father Paul thought he was badly treated because they did not come out of a hothouse. He likes scarlet geraniums and that sort of thing.'

'A bouquet with scarlet geraniums always makes me think of raw mutton chops.'

Lady Blanche heard this and thought how good it was of him to be pleasant to Mrs. Marchmont. She smiled approval to him, little dreaming the youth's nefarious designs.

'Did you know this Mauleverer?' he asked.

'Yes, he died just two years after we settled at Birchtown. Poor old man! his end was a sad one.'

'Ah! really?'

The 'really' sounded precisely like an interrogation. Mrs. Marchmont went on.

'He lost his wife and all his children, his three boys, one death following upon another with such dreadful rapidity, that his mind quite gave way. You know he became a pervert—yes, went over to Rome on his death-bed.' This latter part of her sentence was conveyed in a whisper. Chichele contented himself with raising his eyebrows. 'That Father Conroy,' pursued Mrs. Marchmont, 'took advantage of the poor old man's state of mind—they are all Jesuits, you know, worked upon him, and——' a shrug of her shoulders finished the sentence. 'I must say he was disinterested enough, for he did not attempt to get any money from poor old Godfrey.'

'Father Conroy is the parish priest, I presume,' remarked Chichele.

'Yes. He is quite a character. He behaves rather well as a rule.'

Captain Marchmont was relating the news of the county to Lady Blanche. Shootings and midnight drillings were

the topics of conversation. The agent was by no means inclined to minimise matters. He rather dwelt upon the risks he was exposed to. Mr. Courthope listened eagerly. Tighe O'Malley's face wore an expression, part incredulous, part contemptuous.

'You know all they are doing, at all events, Marchmont,' said he. 'Try that brown sherry near you, then. If forewarned is forearmed, you can't be taken by surprise.'

Captain Marchmont filled his glass slowly. 'I'm not any worse off than my neighbours. Stewart has a bullet in him this month back; it seems likely to stop; and seeing that some barrels of muskets are hid about the place, and that a further consignment is expected, there may be more of us the same way——'

'Oh! the muskets! That is an old story. They get them periodically, bury them magpie fashion, and then forget where they are.'

'You don't take things seriously,' said Mr. Courthope, addressing O'Malley.

'I don't think the thing real somehow or other. I rather fancy I know my people better. They have an innate love of gathering in holes and corners, of mystical oaths, and occult compacts.'

'And potted agents,' muttered Captain Marchmont.

'They are just like children,' continued Tighe O'Malley.

'These interesting children of nature are tolerable hands at murder though,' remarked Chichele. He could not make Mrs. Marchmont talk of the Mauleverers.

'I was only speaking of the political aspect of affairs,' said Tighe. 'Murders are domestic matters of no imperial moment. Courthope, you are over here to examine Irish affairs. I don't know if you have a mission, or are acting on your own hook. You know right well Government does not care a fig how many of *us* are knocked on the head, so long as it is done without a *political* motive. The instant Irish devilment assumes a *political* shade, then you all wake up. There! go at Marchmont. He is stuffed like a bluebook with all sorts of melancholy information.

You'll cut quite a figure in the House, with the Irish information he'll give you.'

'Tighe!' called Lady Blanche suddenly, from the other end of the table. 'Chichele told us that he saw that wonderful Miss D'Arcy you told me about, this afternoon, as he went along the river road.'

'Hay! did he?' said Tighe, looking bewildered.

'Miss D'Arcy is quite paralysed, helpless. She never leaves her chair,' said Mrs. Marchmont. 'You could not have seen her out of doors,' she said, addressing Chichele.

'*Who* was it, then?' asked that gentleman, boldly putting the question at large, and raising his voice. 'It was a most peculiar-looking——'

'If it was one of the young brood, I saw nothing peculiar or out of the way about them—not this time, at all events,' replied Tighe O'Malley. 'I had the pleasure of making the eldest girl's acquaintance once before. She was up in one of the big trees at the Limerick Road entrance. An awful child she was—ten years old, all legs and arms, and with eyes like a hare. I got her down with great difficulty, and exhorted her sternly. Could not extract a word from her; she was as dumb as a stock-fish. Thady Clifford told me—I sent him to take her home and report her behaviour—that as soon as I was out of sight she took a crow's egg out of her mouth, which probably was the reason she declined conversation.'

'Well!' cried Mrs. Marchmont. 'I am astonished at such an escapade. The Mauleverers are exceedingly carefully brought up. Miss D'Arcy is very strict, and sends them to school every day. I never see them, unless I chance to meet them coming or going to the convent. Father Conroy also looks after them—he is devoted to those children.'

'How old are they now?' asked Lady Blanche thoughtfully.

'I can tell you,' said her husband. 'The eldest is the girl. She must be over sixteen, perhaps seventeen; then Godfrey, a year younger, and the other girl comes next to

him. Poor things! I am sorry for them, but the aunt, and Father Conroy, who is her guide and adviser in all things, are completely impracticable. I offered to educate the boy—a splendid-looking child he used to be. They refused point blank.'

Tighe O'Malley did not mention that his offer was coupled with the condition of Miss D'Arcy giving up all claims to the child, and also that the school selected by him was a Protestant grammar school in the north of England.

'Tell us who these Mauleverers are, Tighe!' asked Mrs. Courthope. 'We are all *en famille* here, and I am quite intrigued to know.'

The servants had all left the room, and it was nearly time for Lady Blanche's signal to retreat.

'Thought you knew,' remarked Tighe O'Malley. 'I assure you it is quite a romance. It is now seven or eight years, I suppose, since I heard of old Godfrey's death, which followed that of his sons, poor old chap. Well, I knew there was this eldest nephew and namesake, a man in the Line—poor devil!—knocking about somewhere or other. I came after him, but gave myself precious little concern about that. I recollect it like yesterday. I was fishing in the Lough, about seven miles from home, and they sent a man on horseback after me. I could hardly realise the thing at first.'

Tighe O'Malley paused a moment and lifted his glass of claret between his eye and the hanging lamp. He laid it down again, and continued:

'Poor Godfrey! we had all lost sight of him for fifteen years or more. There were some ugly stories, some words of an entanglement, and among us all we rather shelved him. He had gone out yachting with a man whom I have often met since, Harry Crawshaw, and was taken ill on board. They put into Portsmouth and got a medical man, who pronounced him to be suffering from malignant typhus. Crawshaw knew all about him, and, as he told me, thought he was a widower living with an old aunt of his, or some connection any way, what exactly, he could not say.

Crawshaw did all in his power—he is a good-hearted fellow—telegraphed to Jersey for the aunt, Miss D'Arcy. It was a hopeless case from the beginning. Mauleverer had lived hard, and had no constitution. He died shortly after her arrival, a week or so after, never having regained consciousness. I cannot tell what possessed the old aunt, the Miss D'Arcy. I fancy our friend here below, Father Conroy—he is a relative of hers—was standing in with her. Be that as it may, as a relation he was bound to take her part. At all events, I was sitting at breakfast one morning here in the little study, when a letter was brought to me. Jove! it might have all happened yesterday. This was from the venerable *padre*, and couched in the most business-like tones, to inform me that the family of the late lamented Godfrey had arrived, etc. etc. To give him his due the old gentleman was both respectful and candid. He begged for an interview on behalf of Miss D'Arcy, etc. Well, I had half a mind to refer them all to Smythe in Dublin, my man of business, but on reflection thought I'd see the old lady. Godfrey had not been even heard of, save by evil report, for such ages that there was no telling what might not have happened. So I repaired as requested to Chapel House. I felt very badly I can assure you. Shan't forget my drive down in a hurry. I had never seen Miss D'Arcy before, and I can tell you she was an astonishing figure. She came into the room with an air something like Lady Macbeth—great round black eyes with a fixed look in them that positively made me creep—her white hair all rolled up off her forehead like the women in the old portraits—queerly dressed and got up altogether, looking, as I thought *afterwards*—I'm free to confess I was in too great a funk to notice much then—like an escaped Bedlamite. She spoke in great excitement, but gave me the idea of being quite sincere. Then she got incoherent. Poor old woman! I was as nervous as she was, and I'm afraid I was rough with her. I asked her, when she declared Mrs. Mauleverer had died six or so years before, where and when they had been married. She tried to answer me. Father Conroy interposed, and as

well as I recollect put the same query to her, only a little differently. Then and there she tumbled over in a fit—a paralytic stroke. It was an awful scene. I assure you I did not get it out of my head for a month.

‘We got the doctor. I carried her to the housekeeper’s room. She remained speechless, I heard, for a long time; but partially recovered, and sent me a message of mingled defiance and abuse. This was because I offered them something to live on. I felt bound to do it. The children are Godfrey’s any way.’

Tighe O’Malley suppressed the fact that this offer was coupled with a condition that Miss D’Arcy and the three children should return to Jersey and stay there.

‘She refused to take a penny,’ he went on, ‘but Father Conroy, who is very poor, draws on me for their school bills, and they live rent free in the Quaker’s house opposite the back gate—Fir House they call it. Father Conroy in good part supports them. The old woman has about sixty or seventy pounds a year, an allowance paid from some estate belonging to her family in Clare. She is bedridden or nearly so.’

‘What will become of the children?’ asked Mrs. Courthope.

‘Don’t know,’ answered Tighe O’Malley calmly. ‘You see, they are being educated. The girls—er—Father Conroy will probably put them to business. That boy—by the bye, I must talk to Father Conroy about him. I promised to get him a nomination to a bank, if he could pass the examination.’

‘I can tell you something about him,’ said Captain Marchmont. ‘He keeps thorough bad company, and I should say was on the high road to qualify himself for—well—the most eminent distinction.’

‘Hay!’ cried O’Malley. ‘What, begun already?’

‘Lethbridge, the sub-inspector, can tell you about him. I shan’t say any more just now,’ said the agent, with a significant glance to the door.

The master of the house nodded assent. Lady Blanche glanced to Mrs. Courthope and rose. Mr. Ansdale, who

had been plunged in a brown study for some minutes, opened the door for them.

‘Blanche, dear! did you recollect to tell them to have a fire in the billiard-room?’

‘Yes, yes, you will find it all right,’ she made answer.

CHAPTER XII

'Ourself

Observed his courtships to the common people,
How he did seem to dive into their hearts
With humble and familiar courtesy ;
What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles
And patient underbearing of his fortune,
As 'twere to banish their effects on him ;
Off goes his bonnet to an oyster wench,
A brace of draymen bid—God speed him well,
And had the tribute of his supple knee !'

'Do you go fishing with Tighe and Jack to-day?' asked Lady Blanche of Chichele the next morning.

'I was thinking about something of the kind,' he replied vaguely. 'Don't feel sure that I shan't let them go, and try what the water is like when I have their report. I will see about fishing to-morrow.'

'Chichele, you *are* cool,' said Mrs. Courthope. 'How funny it is to have breakfast without letters.'

'How is it the letter-bag has not come?' Tighe asked the butler, who came in with some local newspapers at that minute.

'A breakdown of the mail, sir. They'll be in by eleven.'

'Funny?' said Tighe O'Malley, who was reading a Cork newspaper. 'I call it a delightful accident.'

'And I too,' said the M.P.

'So do I,' added her brother. 'Ida, recant this moment or perish miserably. You are in a minority of one.'

'Oh no!' said Lady Blanche. 'I go with her altogether. I wanted ever so much news this morning.'

'Well, well!' said Tighe, cutting this short, 'Vickers! we must have a lunch basket packed. We start in half an hour.'

'Chichele, *are* you going fishing?' asked Mrs. Courthope.

She wished in her heart to go also, and she fancied if she could induce her brother to say that he would join the party that there would be a chance for her to get off with them, a much more pleasing prospect than to be shown the house and the gardens and the greenhouses, which were really nothing to see, and would only serve to recall much handsomer ones.

Chichele salted his egg deliberately without taking further notice of her question than to look at her with widely-opened eyes.

'No?' she questioned.

'Perhaps I shall, after all,' he said, speaking to Tighe, and getting up to look out of the window. 'It is going to be a lovely day for fishing. Do you start immediately?'

'Yes,' replied O'Malley.

Chichele is so unkind. You cannot possibly want all the bag to yourself, Chichele?'

'I'll take you,' he made answer slowly, 'upon one condition. If you find it unacceptable I am to hear no more of it.'

'And that?' she cried.

'That you dress in a suit of my clothes—yes, from head to foot. Upon no other terms whatever!' There was an allusion in this to an old practical joke that was not a favourite reminiscence of hers. So Mrs. Courthope pouted. She knew her brother's 'ways' and suspected him of some design upon the mill-house. Mrs. Marchmont had been dilating upon the beauty of the girls there in a manner to fill her sisterly heart with alarm, and his Macchiavellian conversation, or rather silence, of the previous afternoon had not deceived her for an instant. All sorts of hideous contingencies flashed before her brain. She determined to keep a close watch upon him

'I say, O'Malley,' began Chichele, after an interval devoted to breakfast, 'is there not another way out of the park, an entrance from the Dublin Road?'

'Yes, the north entrance. Take the path through the laurels to the right of the hall door, go on by the orchard wall, past the wire-fenced paddocks till you find yourself in the open. The road is plain enough. If you are going to Knockstuart Bog it is rather a round.'

'Better join us,' said his brother-in-law.

Chichele delayed his decision as long as possible on purpose to tease his sister. He was very fond of her, but she was twelve years his senior and abused her privileges. It was only a few minutes before they started that he finally announced his intention of accompanying them. He did not delay an instant but jumped up behind, all ready, and with a cigar lighted he waved an affectionate adieu to his sister and Lady Blanche.

'I wonder what that sister of mine has taken into her head,' he thought. 'Whence this frantic eagerness for my companionship? It is my firm conviction that had I remained one more quarter of an hour in her vicinity I should have been forced to go out to tea with them this afternoon.'

Then he abandoned thinking or definite mental action of any kind, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of the lovely morning, and the landscape, which, although it was the fifth time that he had seen it during the past few days, seemed to present something fresh and strange. The buds were larger. The green of the trees seemed more opaque. It was not so easy to see the distant mountains through the branches of the elms and beeches. There were more narcissus in blossom under the chestnuts, and the primroses lighted up the recesses of the shrubbery with masses of blossom that grew paler and whiter in measure with the darkness of their surroundings. The dew glistened on the grass. The dark foliage of the laurustinus and the cherry laurels shone in the sun, and the blackbirds and thrushes darted here and there on the mown selvages of the drives, picking up such reptiles as had forgotten themselves over night.

'The early bird,' murmured Chichele Ansdale, as he noted a thrush gulp his *trouvaille*, and then pause for a moment in the thoughtful manner peculiar to the species—'and the—the punctual worm. *He* can't possibly sing after that.'

A moment or two brought them out of the gateway. He turned sideways on his seat so as to look across the river. The great ivy-grown gate entrance seemed all shut up; the little sunk side door could not be seen. A whole crowd of sparrows were flying in and out of the ivy, chattering furiously. The garden wall had a fine crop of wall-flowers, and as they got farther away the tops of the fruit-trees, all covered with pink blossom, became visible, and the back windows of the upper rooms. There were no blinds or curtains to them, so he had all the view that was attainable. He fancied he could distinguish a head in the middle pane of one window.

'Who lives there?' he said suddenly, half in spite of himself, to the groom beside him.

'Maulevers, sir.'

'Maul—ever, eh!' Then, after a pause, 'Is there a road by which one could go round about, say from the town over in that direction, and return to this point by the river—so?' describing a wide curve with his left arm which was next the river.

'Yes, sir. You could cross the bridge and follow on the Limerick Road as far as you liked, and then cut across the fields to your right. The Limerick Road is high, and you can easy make your way to the river; you'll see it all the way. It is very dirty walking up there. You get on the low ground towards the bog.'

'Ha!' observed Chichele, with a glance in the direction of his strong boots, expressive of self-gratulation.

They were passing the Chapel House now, an extremely ugly, square-shaped house, bald and bare as a barn, and stuccoed all over, with a garden in front, which was all fresh-dug black earth and not too neatly-kept grass, straggling down to the edge of the road. The chapel was a very large cut-stone edifice, which looked very imposing against

a background of tall elms and sycamores, in whose branches a legion of crows had made a colony. The graveyard lay on the side nearest the town. Rank overgrown grass and weeds clustered round the headstones and crosses. A broad path led down the slope to the gate, and it showed distinct signs of preference by the chapel-goers, as compared with the great gates which stood hospitably open in the centre.

‘Let me down at the bridge, Tighe, will you?’ said Mr. Ansdale. ‘I want to cross over to the Limerick Road.’

‘Eh? I thought you were coming with us,’ observed Tighe, breaking off in a dissertation to Mr. Courthope on the ineradicable affection and esteem of the Irish for their landlords. He had repeatedly called his attention to the respectful manner in which every one whom they had met since leaving the river gate had touched his hat.

Mr. Ansdale did not reply, and Tighe O'Malley resumed his discourse. As they passed Quin's shop, the owner, warned of the advent of the dog-cart by a loungee at the shop door, stepped out on the side-path, and made an elaborate bow.

‘Do you see that?’ said O'Malley exultingly, after replying with a loud ‘Morra! Quin, morra!’ ‘Now I hardly buy a thing from that man—nothing worth talking of, and yet you see how civil and respectful, quite cordial, his manners are.’ Then he put his right hand in his pocket to extract sixpences and smaller coins for the beggars on the bridge, who, seeing him approach, were shaking out their rags to the best advantage, and putting on all their professional airs and graces. Lord Cork began to cough with a violence that menaced the window-glass in his neighbourhood, and Andy Lehan stopped an account of a wake at which he had assisted the previous night, and from the festivities of which he had by no means recovered, to assume an expression of face that only the Knight of the Rueful Countenance could have rivalled. It was all acted. They were humbugging Tighe O'Malley and he was humbugging them. Both parties knew it. Lord Cork and his

peers wanted the money, and knew that O'Malley wanted to give it to them, that he was afraid of them, and stood in need of their good-will. Courthope's instinct scented something false, something forced, in the entire scene. Disgust superseded pity in his mind, as he noted Lord Cork's broad shoulders, and the activity of Andy, Peggy, Jimmy, and the rest. Tighe's change of voice, accent, and manner irritated him intensely. What was the meaning of it all? he asked himself. He could understand the beggars' but not O'Malley's attitude.

The beggars advanced in a squad to meet the dog-cart; Peggy, beads in hand, well to the fore. Tighe was prepared for this manœuvre, and launched his shower of small silver. She caught one sixpence, and planted her flat red foot with great dexterity on another, contriving to keep it there until her worthy spouse, whose short sight prevented his catching the flying coins, was on all fours groping for the one or two pieces out of the shower of money which found their way to the ground. A judicious kick guided his attention aright, and Tighe O'Malley obtained a good twelpence worth of benisons from the worthy couple. Lord Cork's surly maledictions—he had got nothing—possibly counterbalanced the effect of them.

Chichele Ansdale, on his side, surveyed the scene with more interest than disgust. He had been in Naples during the winter, and the dress and manners of these villagers rather recalled the scenes of the *Chiaja*. The men were wonderfully like, the same abandonment—picturesque, but not decent—of dress, the wild eyes, slouching attitudes, and melancholy faces.

'Where on earth do these people come from? Are they hereditary beggars?' questioned Mr. Courthope.

'My dear fellow, I found them all here when I came. These are, as you see, old people; I could not pretend to trace their genesis.'

Mr. Courthope remarked to himself that there were a very large number of young beggars mingled with the same patriarchs, and as he looked he became aware of a formidable battalion of half-naked children swarm-

ing across the bridge from the lanes on the Limerick side.

'Have you no schools? It is eleven o'clock.'

'Oh, my dear Courthope, you are not in a Church of England village now. You can go and see the schools if you want, but the people will be better pleased if you don't. I never interfere. Since that National school was opened I never set foot in it, although I am supposed to be manager—I leave it all to Father Paul. I gave them the ground to build on, just as I gave ground for their new chapel and their burying-ground.'

'I say, Tighe,' said Chichele, 'will these aborigines devour me if I get down here? I confess they look dangerous.'

'Stuff!' returned Tighe, a little sharply. 'The most harmless, amiable——'

'Ta, ta, old man!' observed his guest, with a nod, as he jumped lightly to the ground.

The dog-cart drove off, and Chichele took his way across the river, carefully avoiding the neighbourhood of the groups of beggars, who were feasting their eyes on the novelty of a well-dressed prosperous-looking stranger. They did not ask for alms. Some little children held out their hands as he descended the slope of the Limerick Road, and moved more æsthetically than benevolently by the appeal in their almost invariably beautiful eyes, he tossed them a handful of coppers, and strode away quickly, glad to leave the squalor of the river-side cabins for the broad fresh campaign that opened wide before him.

Before long he had reached the osier field that separated the Mauleverers' dwelling from the high-road. He recognised the house at once; the old lichen-grown garden wall that topped the ditch bank, with its flourishing crop of wall-flowers, was lower on this side, and over the top of it was to be seen a great mass of blossoming fruit-trees. Chichele threw away his cigar and slackened his pace. When he arrived at the gap in the ditch bank that bordered the road he halted and scrutinised the stepping-stones and the broken paling in the swamp. A sudden impulse seized

him to follow this queer risky pathway through the osiers as far as the garden door in the wall. The door looked as if it were ajar. How delicious to have a ramble under the apple-trees! The smell of them must be perfect: he drew a long breath, endeavouring to trace their sweet influence in the air about him, but he could find nothing but the dank marshy odour of the willow swamp. The catkins were all out. It was the year for cutting the osiers, and a pale reddish glow covered all the lattice of rods.

'Dare I or no?' questioned he, balancing himself as if to spring to the second stone, but at that moment, fortunately for his dignity, his eye perceived a countryman approaching down the road. He was still some distance off. Chichele stood for a moment, then calmly regained the roadway—footpath there was none—and strolled onward as if such a wild idea had never entered his head. The countryman, a good-looking young fellow, roughly but decently clad, civilly stepped outside him as he passed, raising his hat as he did so with a civil 'Fine day,' and a half nod that conveyed 'Sir,' although he did not say it.

'Very,' returned Chichele, and then—he could not help it—'who lives in that house?' he asked, indicating the only one in view.

'Maulevers, sir.'

'Oh thank you. It is a curious-looking old place. Er—who are the people? It is not a common name, is it?'

'A common name wouldn't answer them,' was the reply in a curious tone, accompanied by a sharp distrustful look.

'Ah, really!' returned Chichele, who was anything but obtuse. 'Thanks; lovely day,' and strolled on unconcernedly. He was rather pleased than otherwise with the answer, and yet for the life of him he could not have told why. He walked very slowly; nevertheless it was not long before the elms and chestnuts shut out all view of the house, and boggy fields, with the white wraith of last year's grasses yet standing behind the new growth, succeeded to

the more interesting expanse of pollard willows waving their catkins above the black pools of the swamp. Untidy straggling hedges and ditches divided the fields; last year's bracken still lingered by their sides, half-choked by the lush growth of the brambles and wild rose bushes. Every ditch was full of fresh rain-water. Turn which way he would, the sound of murmuring streams reached his ears. Deep cuttings at both sides carried off the water, which ran in channels under the road, and then through straggling down-sloping ditches across the bog to the river-bed.

'I wonder where that road leads to,' mused Chichele, stopping at the side road which led upwards round the hill to Ahearne's farm and the ruined Lambert's Castle.

'It looks as if it might have been somebody's gate entrance once,' added he, noting the solitary stone pier fallen and overthrown in the ditch. 'I shall follow this track and see if I do not discover some interesting ruin or other.'

The cart-track gave evidence of being freshly used. Fragments of straw and hay hung in the hedges, and through the hazel and thorn bushes he could see ploughed fields on both sides. Presently the track, which led round a hill and away from the high-road, turned. Almost that moment a voice fell on his ears, and at the same time he saw, mounted on top of a wall of loose stones, a girl who seemed to be in a state of great excitement. She was calling loudly.

'Don't, oh please don't! if he knocks you down you'll be hurt. It is dangerous, so it is indeed. O-o-o-h!' she wailed. There was real terror in her voice. Chichele leaped through the hedge in a moment, and unobserved by the occupant of the dike-wall, reached it at a run and jumped up beside her just in time to witness a very extraordinary spectacle.

A ram, a big curly-horned wicked-looking ancient, who was chained by one leg to a stake driven in the ground, was making fierce charges at no less a person than—Chichele almost doubted his eyes—the vision he had seen on the river-bank the day before, Miss Mauleverer herself, none other.

'O-o-oh!' wailed the girl on the top of the wall again. 'He's breaking loose. The stake is pulling out of the ground. Miss Maulever, you'll be killed.'

It was exactly as she said. The ram, whose short temper had been irritated by Miss Mauleverer purposely placing herself within reach of his horns and then drawing back just in time to avoid receiving their impact, had become perfectly furious at this tantalising, and the stake was giving way under his vigorous tugs and jerks. Chichele leaped into the field instantly, and rushed across at the very moment that the stake yielded, which it did so suddenly that the brute lost his equilibrium and staggered to one side, missing in consequence an otherwise well-aimed butt at his tormentor. She, too, startled, lost her balance and fell. Chichele had the chain in one minute, and by main force held the animal back while she scrambled up the dike. He stuck the spike back in the hole, and with a stone from the wall hammered it down. Then he jumped right over the wall, not too soon, for his captive was evidently about to transfer his attentions to him.

'Oh, oh!' moaned Mary Ahearne, the girl who had been on the dike. She was now standing in the field at the other side, and was deadly pale, and trembling as she cried, 'Miss Maulever, you had liked to be killed. That beast nearly killed a man where he came from. Oh, sir! only for you we were lost.'

Miss Mauleverer descended from her altitude silently. She now turned towards her rescuer, and made as if to utter some formula of thanks, but her nerves failed her. She stood still trembling from head to foot for a moment, and then sank on her knees half unconscious and wholly powerless. Mary Ahearne recovered herself instantly and she and Chichele sprang at once to her assistance.

'Are we near a house?' he asked, addressing and looking at Mary Ahearne for the first time. 'If she could have a glass of water!'

'I don't want any,' Marion said with a strong effort. 'Thank you—thank you!' She jumped up and started

back from him with one and the same motion. The colour came back to her cheeks and lips.

'Not at all,' he replied gravely, lifting his hat and moving back a little. 'I am glad to have been of any service.' He turned then to Mary Ahearne, and noticing that she had nothing on her head, concluded therefrom that she was at home or near home.

'That is evidently a dangerous animal. Were you crossing the field? How did you happen to get over safe?'

'He isn't dangerous,' she replied, fixing her eyes on the ground, and keeping them there, 'that is, if you don't go near him.' She looked reproachfully at her companion as she said this.

'Oh! I understand then that you did,' said Chichele, addressing Marion. 'You defied him.'

'I did not *defy* him,' she said. 'I only tried.' Then she broke off, and turned as if to walk away. Her companion put herself in motion also. Chichele, as if automatically, followed their example.

'What did you try to do?' he asked of Marion, but in reality questioning the other girl. Marion left her to answer, which she did as if under compulsion.

'To run by him from one side to the other and back again,' said Mary Ahearne simply, and heaving a deep sigh. Marion darted a look half angry, wholly contemptuous, at the speaker.

Chichele, silent as the grave, but inwardly convulsed, noted this.

'Only you came up, she'd have been killed,' continued Mary Ahearne. She looked for the first time at him, and as their eyes met the young man noted that hers were full of tears. She was a plain-looking lumpish girl, a little like a servant, he had just decided, only that her face was refined and sweet-looking, but she was no longer uninteresting. He glanced from her to the slim graceful back of his 'salvage,' as he internally styled her. She was in front of them, holding herself very erect, and looking neither to the right nor left. They came to a gap in the hedge, the

same through which he had entered. She turned round, and addressing her friend said, 'I think I shall go home, Mary.'

'Come up to the house, Miss Mauleverer, do! and sit down for a while. I'm really obliged to you, sir,' said Mary Ahearne, turning again to the stranger, 'I am, indeed! What would we all do, only for you?' She began to cry in earnest now.

'Don't cry,' said Miss Mauleverer, 'Mary. What is the use? I am all safe, and it won't happen again, I promise you.' She went close to the sympathetic Mary, and whispered something in her ear.

'Good-bye for to-day,' she said then. 'I must go home.' Then she turned to the young man, and said evidently with an effort, for she inwardly was very much ashamed of herself, 'I am very much obliged to you, and I am sorry for having been so foolish. I never thought any one would see me, and I just did it to tease her,' indicating her companion. 'You have saved my life perhaps.'

There was not much gratitude in her voice or manner, and her face flushed as she spoke, till her clear olive skin was all suffused.

'That was quite an accident, I assure you,' he said. 'I heard cries for help, and as any one would do under similar circumstances, ran to see what was the matter. If,' he added a little maliciously and laughing, 'you wish to repeat the amusement, I would recommend you to make arrangements beforehand.'

'I am greatly obliged to you,' she returned quite gravely, and ignoring his irony. Then she bowed slightly to him in a marked manner, sprang over the low dike, and out on to the breen, where the hazels and hawthorns soon hid her from sight. Chichele started; so sudden and unexpected had this movement been that he was taken completely unawares. Since the previous day he had thought literally of nothing but his chance of again seeing her, and had resolved all manner of possible or impossible contingencies in his own mind—wild stratagems for making her acquaintance—chance encounters, and opportunities

skilfully improved. And here the most unlooked-for, the most improbable and palpably heaven-sent accident had brought him to the actual realisation of his wildest dream. He had spoken to her, he had touched her hand, he had saved her from being hurt, saved her life perhaps—only a few minutes ago, and here she was gone. The sound of her feet on the stony roadway had actually died away in the distance. The tree stems and bushes had hidden her from his view long ago. A few minutes and the whole thing would be at an end—would be no more than something that had happened last week, last year. A wild impulse seized him to brush Mary Ahearne out of his path, she was standing still in the same spot, crying and saying something which fell unheard and unheeded on his ears,—leap through the hedge, and fly down the hilly lane after his escaping prize. A look at his companion forbade this. He checked himself with a strong effort, and turned to her.

• ‘That was Miss——?’ questioningly.

‘Miss Maulever; yes sir.’

‘Is she going home? Where does she live?’

‘Just about half a mile from the town on this side. You keep the road by the bog-side, and it takes you to a field of sallies, and it’s the house by the river where the Quaker’s old mill is. Fir House they call it now. Oh, sir! it was God sent you out this way to-day.’

‘Oh, don’t think anything about it, I beg of you, and don’t consider the animal yonder to blame either. Good day! It is really nothing worth mentioning.’ He raised his hat, and to her astonishment, instead of returning by the breen, turned right round and crossed the field, walking pretty smartly.

‘I do hope that young person will take herself off home,’ thought he, ‘to the house she came out of. That cart-track winds so. I imagine it to be on the other side of the slope. The high-road lies below on my right somewhere, and if I mistake not a very watery bog intervenes between me and it.’ He stood for an instant as if to take account of where he was. ‘Straight on, then downwards, and—I

must overtake her—that road-track slopes off to the westward.'

So he muttered to himself as he pushed his way through a blackthorn hedge. A couple of nesting birds flew with a wild squeal before his rude assault of the bush that hid their domicile. A magpie rose from beside some sheep, and flapped with a malignant sounding cackle till she rose in mid-air at last, and made for a copse far up the hillside. He was out of sight of the young person now, so he changed his measured gait to a rapid stride, which by the time he had crossed another field became a more rapid run. The dead weeds, loaded with moisture, splashed and stained his leggings. His boots were loaded with stiff clay that in its turn formed a foundation for bog stuff. Even his face was splashed, for in his mad headlong career he never stopped to look where he set his feet, still downward he held his way.

'I *must*—I *will* overtake her,' he murmured.

CHAPTER XIII

'Tis in ourselves, That we are thus, or thus, Our bodies are our gardens ; to the which our wills are gardeners, So that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many, either have it stink with idleness or manured with industry,—why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills.'

MR. COURTHOPE looked all round about him deliberately while the dog-cart stopped to let Chichele Ansdale get down.

'O'Malley,' he said, after a disgusted survey of the ragged cringing mob behind them, 'what is the meaning of allowing this? You have workhouses; why don't the police arrest these people for begging, and take them before the magistrate?'

'Take them up for begging, is it?' exploded Tighe with a loud laugh. 'Man! they'd have to roof the island in. It's the only recognised profession in Ireland. Go into the Four Courts in Dublin and look at them there. Deuce a bit of difference between them and these beggars, only they are a deal more mischievous. From the highest to the lowest are we not all at it—for some one else if not for ourselves? "It's a fine day," says the Englishman; "let's go out and kill something." Says the Irishman, "It's a fine day; let's go out and beg for a place." The moment you have a visible means of *earning* your living, that moment you cease to be respectable. Take to the road, that's understood, you're somebody then.'

Courthope, who was literal of thought and speech,

looked at his host's face as if to make sure that he was not being mystified. His experience of O'Malley had inclined him to the opinion that that versatile person had always, when talking, one foot on sea and one on land, *i.e.* that he was always thinking more of the effect to be produced on the listener's mind than careful to present him with bare facts. So he said nothing, and for a few minutes there was silence.

'I want to take you over as much of the property as possible before trying the river,' said Tighe after a pause. 'I daresay it would not interest Chichele—he'll amuse himself rambling about, but you, who are thirsting and hungering after righteousness in the way of understanding Ireland—have a chance now—before you attack the salmon.'

'I'm all attention,' said Courthope in a not very sanguine tone.

'Look to the right here,' said Tighe, pulling up the horse. 'There is the reclaimed ground! Now my plan is this. Two hundred and fifty acres of that land has been made recently. I give a man two or four, perhaps five, acres of this swamp rent free—mind you, absolutely rent free for a couple of years. He builds a house—you see the kind of cabin it is. The neighbours collect and dig scraws—big square sods of heather and bog stuff. Mud walls are run up in a couple of hours. I never refuse a bit of timber for the roof, the scraws are laid on over the rafters, and there you have a house! A gallon of whisky is his entire outlay!'

'All I can say is, I would not suffer such a thing on my estate, would not allow a fowl-house to be built in such a way! Where did these wretches come from in the beginning,' asked Mr. Courthope. 'The cabins look old.'

'The cabins are not old. You see, they are built in such a way that in a year's time they look all alike. They have not a particle of taste. The low Irish are quite destitute of all notion of beauty—have not the remotest particle of artistic sentiment. Those cabins are exactly the same as they were perhaps six hundred years ago. They never want to improve themselves. Now, observe this land we

are passing here : that was all swamp. My method of reclamation was this. That piece, see, from this mud wall down to the ploughed field, which we'll come to presently, is now rented at five hundred a year. I marked it all out in stripes, and gave a stripe to every one who chose to ask for it—rent free—do you see, *rent free*, for a couple of years. They were only too glad to get it. Then I gave them wood for their houses——'

'You did not build the houses? It is not the custom.'

'Not at all! no one ever does that here. I gave them, as I was saying, wood for their houses : a party of fellows would collect together, cut scraws, that is to say, a great square piece two feet long, two broad, off the surface of the bog ; then the sticks laid across and the scraws on top, the boulders and stones collected off the hard ground a little higher up, laid on top to keep down the scraws. Why! I have seen a house like that,' pointing to a cabin, the roof of which was sprouting green like a meadow, 'built in a couple of hours. Then they drained and limed and fenced the ground. The first year it would grow a crop of potatoes, the second year maybe rye grass, and then, of course, the rent began.'

'I daresay! but tell me this. How does the tenant support himself? He spends a couple of years reclaiming this ground; what feeds and clothes him in the meantime?'

'Oh! you know the women and children do the great part of the work. The men go to England for six, sometimes ten, months of the year, and a few drills of potatoes feed them.'

'And as fast as they have the land fit to bear—created—they are put out, and you let it to somebody else.'

'Pooh, Courthope! They are begging for allotments of the bog and swamp every day on these terms.'

'What rent do you get for those farms made from this reclaimed ground?'

'It varies! I get two pounds ten for some, you see this land is close to the town; it runs from five shillings up to three pounds an acre.'

'Too high, I should say; I would not pay the half of it.'

'You say these farms are over-rented, Courthope?'

'Yes, I can only get thirty shillings an acre, and fifteen shillings for far better land.'

Tighe smiled broadly in the inquiring face of his friend.

'You English will insist on comparing Ireland to other countries. I tell you, Courthope, once more, that you must accept facts as they are, and not seek to explain them by comparison with foreign countries. Suppose you had a farm to let, and that Smith offered you fifteen shillings an acre for it, and a lump sum in hand may be, equal to the fee-simple, and that immediately after, or simultaneously with his offer, Brown offered thirty shillings an acre, and the aforesaid lump sum, or as much again, for the same farm, and that Robinson bid over him again, tell me which of them you would give the farm to.'

Courthope looked at him for a minute. 'Surely that is a preposterous or an extreme statement.'

'Of course it is only an illustration of the principle on which dealings in land are conducted here. They don't as a rule bid an advance of one hundred per cent over each other, but they bid against each other heavily. Take for instance the Redhill farm, above there on the slope; it is fifty Irish acres, and the rent is two pounds five per acre. It is good land, and the house is what they call a good one. The lease of that farm will be out in a year, and the tenant wants it renewed, offering eight hundred pounds fine.'

'And of course getting it at a reduced rate?'

'No such thing! A shopkeeper from Durbantown will give a thousand, and it is a queer thing to me if I don't have twelve hundred offered yet for a new lease.'

'Did you improve the land? Have you supplied manure, or built the house?'

'Never laid out a copper on the place in my life, nor my predecessor either. They will give any money for land in this country; they don't care to invest in anything else. They get only one and a half per cent in the bank. It's a chance but that cattle-feeding will pay better.'

'They first of all agree to pay a rent which is exorbitant.'

'But,' interrupted Tighe, 'which they fix themselves.'

'Yes,' accepted the other, resuming; 'and then compete with each other in adding as much as fifty per cent to this rent, and throwing away their capital altogether.'

'Just so; you have it in a nutshell now,' and Tighe fixed his strong white teeth in a fresh cigar, smiling once more as he did so, but this time in a slightly different manner.

They drove along in silence for a while. Mr. Court-hope's face expressed bewilderment and disgust.

'How in the world can these people live in such places!' exclaimed he. 'Look at that cabin! The manure heap before the door, the house surrounded by a lake of filth, ugh!'

'They have neither taste, sentiment, nor poetry in their composition,' observed O'Malley. 'Oh, I can tell you, I know them all to the bone, and a more hard-headed, grasping lot don't exist. A marriage is just a hard and fast bargain. Now, to give you an example, that farm of mine—above on the back of the hill about five miles from this—Lambert's Castle. The man who has that, Ahearne, has three children; his eldest boy gets the farm. He has but one boy, and the two girls will be married off to a brace of fellows who each want four hundred and is willing to take a wife along with it. There is not a vestige of romance in the business. A professional matchmaker in the town, knowing that young Luke has made it up with a girl in Waterford and must clear the house of his sisters before he can marry, sends, as the phrase goes, an account of a match from Tom or Jack anybody—Capel, I believe, the bridegroom's name is—and having agreed as to the figure of the girl's *dot*, the thing is done in a trice.'

'What do you mean by saying that the son gets the farm?'

'His father gives it up to him when he marries, reserving a share of the house and the produce—ridge of potatoes, another of turnips, the grass of a cow. It's a most curious custom, but, like the rest of their customs, works very well. The girls get their share. The son buys out his sisters' interest; the girls marry, and their fortunes buy out their sisters-in-law, and so on.'

'I infer from what you say that the capital is never put in the land, and from the state of the land and poor character of the stock I consider the farming is of a bad and backward sort. O'Malley! look at the water lying in the ridges there, and the fern and sedge growing in these pastures! Surely you don't call that properly-kept ground?'

'No, I don't; but so long as they pay I have no reason to complain. I may mention this, that in no country in the world is farming less understood than it is here. The farmers are the most ignorant class in the country.'

'Have you not the National schools?'

'Yes, but they are Government schools, and of course unpopular. Everything the Government meddles with here is somehow a failure. You English cannot understand the Irish, that's all that's about it. There's Thady with the fishing-gear beyond. Now, we'll fish down the river and towards the Limerick Road gates.'

Courthope acquiesced, feeling that he had not been much enlightened as to the customs which O'Malley had described. He could see that they were wrong-headed, and from his point of view senseless; but O'Malley's attitude was puzzling, he condemned them and approved them as it were in the same breath. Courthope began to think that the landlord and the tenants were equally ignorant and perverse.

CHAPTER XIV

'It is a strange thing to note the excess of this passion, and how it braves the nature and value of things by this, that the speaking in a perpetual hyperbole is comely in nothing but in love, neither is it merely in the phrase; for whereas it hath been well said, "That the arch flatterer with whom all the petty flatterers have intelligence, is a man's self," certainly the lover is more, for there never was a proud man thought so absurdly well of himself as the lover doth of the person loved, and therefore it was well said that it is impossible to love and be wise.'

MARION'S nerves, notwithstanding her assumption of calmness and indifference, had been severely shaken. The momentary faintness which she had overcome by an effort of will returned. Her head seemed to reel, and she was obliged to take hold of a tree stem for an instant. Intense mortification rather than the strange adventure caused this physical reaction. The whole circumstances repeated themselves with a galling, stinging distinctness. She saw herself defying the ram successfully, crossing and recrossing the paddock almost within reach of his horns, the at first bewildered, then angry, beast gradually rousing himself to a sense of the intrusion, Mary Ahearne speechless at first, then tearful and frantic, her second venture half successful, then—the stake yielding with the charge of the provoked brute, his wicked curly horns, the sudden cessation—the ram turned and driven off, thrown down, her own fall—her leap across to the dike. Oh, that fool, Mary Ahearne! How could she tell the strange gentleman that she had provoked the ram—had done it all on purpose? Never in this world would she speak to her again—see her—look at

her, even! Her anger lent her strength. She shook off her weakness again and struck off at a rapid rate, keeping straight in the middle of the laneway and heedless of the pools of rain water that marked each stage of the declivity, and of the rough boulders that often bruised her feet. She reached the roadway at last, somewhat calmer, passed out between the broken piers, and, surveying the empty reach of descending road, drew a deep breath.

'He will soon be gone away. A fortnight, Kitty said—yes. I'll never set foot outside the door till then, and so, perhaps no one will know. How lucky that it was only one of those strangers!'

Then another mood came on her with a strange suddenness. She recollected his words, '*What did you try to do?*' and then, after that foolish Mary Ahearne had told of her wild prank, '*If you wish to repeat the amusement.*' She could hear him speak the words again. Never before had she heard a voice like that. It was more music than mere speech, and he was smiling as he spoke.

'It was my fault,' she confessed with deep humiliation; 'and the ram might have killed him instead of me. Oh! if he had been killed, if he had been even hurt, what should I have done?'

She conjured up such a vivid picture of awful consequences that she began to cry at the miseries evoked by her own fancy; and at the same time, and impelled by the same feeling, to walk very fast in the direction of home. She had not proceeded above half a mile on her way when a dismal-sounding cry reached her ears from the roadside. It seemed a long way off—somewhere out of the bog. She turned at once in the direction indicated by her ears, and shortly discovered her late rescuer now in a plight to demand succour in his turn. He was standing on top of a heather clump, having bent the tufts under his feet so as to keep from sinking in the black ooze that bubbled all about them. Before him stretched a dark pool of water, to the right and left a muddy expanse of pools and sedges alike treacherous-looking.

'Go back! oh, go back!' cried Marion, who knew the

place, terrified at the sight of a motion made by him as though to jump to a grassy islet in the pool. She waved her hands imperiously, and mounted on a heap of stones.

'Can I not cross that way?' he cried. 'I am in such a hurry to get home. I don't see how I am to get out of this. I——'

'Go back! oh, go back!' she interrupted him. 'If you fall into that bog-hole you will be drowned. Keep among the heather—the rest is all dangerous.'

'I want to get to the road. I want to cross over there,' he shouted. Then speaking to himself, 'I do not care if I swim that bog-hole, as she calls it. My boots and leggings are heavy enough to make it a difficult task, though.'

'Keep along the high ground! Behind you! In the heather,' called Marion. 'Oh, turn back! There was a man drowned there a short while ago.'

'All right!' he replied, in obedience more to the terror implied in her tones than to his own inclination. 'Will you tell me how to go?'

She directed him by signs. He kept his eyes fixed upon her, and took good care to keep somewhat in advance. A quarter of an hour or less brought him to a pasture field—a part of the reclaimed land. He crossed the boundary, and found himself ankle-deep in wet miry sludge. The walking was heavier than in the bog, nevertheless he made his way so rapidly through it and on to the road that he had to turn back a few paces to meet his guide.

'I am very much obliged for your assistance,' he said.

'Oh no!' she made answer, blushing, 'it is I who ought to be obliged to you, and I am——' She did not finish her sentence, and they walked on in silence for a few minutes.

The day was advanced now. Their shadows were thrown before them as they walked. Not a creature was on the road, hardly a sound broke the stillness of the air, save a distant echo of a bird, the bark of a dog, and the eternal mutter of the watercourses.

Marion stole a look at her companion. He was very tall, she thought. She had never seen any one like him

before—so curiously dressed—and what a face! It reminded her of a picture of Napoleon as a young lieutenant—his were just such straight features, only with colour and life. He looked older than Godfrey, but he could not be twenty. Then their eyes met, and she turned hers to the ground with confusion.

‘Where do you live?’ he began impulsively. ‘You are Miss Mauleverer—I was told your name. Mine is Ansdale—Chichele Ansdale. Have you two names?’

‘No,’ replied Marion, ‘I have only one, Marion—Marion Mauleverer. My sister has two—she is Gertrude Ismay.’ She wondered at herself for speaking but his address and manner were so frank and simple that she forgot her shyness and the fact of his being a stranger, and answered sympathetically. If he had spoken ironically, as he did that time when on the hill above, she would most probably have taken refuge in flight.

‘Chichele is a stupid sort of name, eh? is it not?’ he said.

‘It is not a saint’s name,’ she remarked, half absently. It seemed all unreal to Marion. She only heard a sort of echo of her own words. They were drawing near to the osier field now. She could see the gap in the dike—that much, at all events, was real.

‘Yes, Chichele is a stupid name. I say,’ he interrupted, ‘I am so fearfully wet, Miss Mauleverer. Just look at my boots.’

‘Yes, you are,’ she assented; ‘you had better change them as soon as you can.’

They were close to the gap now. He was inwardly burning for her to offer to take him to the house, to propose a change of foot-gear, any hospitality whatsoever. He felt entitled to it; a change of raiment at least was due to him. He fixed his eyes in keen expectation on her face. She proffered not one word, but turned simply and directly through the open gate, down the slope, he watching every move as if fascinated, and jumped lightly—it was but a step—on to the flat stone by the broken paling, which formed the initial stage of the well-worn short cut

to the garden door. She made not a moment's delay on this, but crossed in the same manner from it on to the narrow crumbling pathway. As soon as she left the stone, he, taking the bit in his teeth, so to say, jumped in desperation on to it. Marion never turned her head, but kept steadily on. The double weight made the crazy boards that bridged over the lowest part of the track bend so that the water beneath splashed up and bubbled through the interstices.

They were approaching the door in the garden wall now, and Chichele's heart was almost in his mouth.

'Can I only get through that door! Oh heavens!' he thought, 'if I am shut out now! The rest is all nothing.'

Marion was in the act of laying her hand on the latch, he pressing close behind, when the old green door flew open, impelled by a hand from within, and there stood the very same old priest whom he had seen walking down the pathway the previous afternoon. The smile which his face had worn as he opened the door was speedily transformed to a round-eyed stare of wonder, in which his mouth played an equal part with his eyes. At sight of him Marion also suffered a transformation. She started violently, and then crimsoned to the roots of her hair.

'Oh! Father Paul, I want to tell you,' she began. 'Ahearne's ram was on the point of killing me, and he would have, only—only this gentleman stopped him.'

'What?' almost roared Father Paul. 'My God! child, is this a fact? Sir, I protest, I am most grateful to you. Heavens! Marion, how did it occur? Step in, I beg.'

Chichele accepted the invitation at once.

'It was my fault. I ran past the ram; I teased him, and he put down his head and charged me. Really you might have heard Mary Ahearne a mile away screaming, and he was just about touching me. I felt his horns almost when——' she stopped and looked at her companion.

'I was only too glad to have been of any service,' he made haste to say, looking at Father Paul.

'Heavens! Sir, I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you. Marion, how—why? You should not have gone near the dangerous brute.' This last was delivered with all the tone and manner of a violent scolding.

'Just so,' she replied calmly, taking him by the arm, and looking up in his face. 'But I say, Father Paul, Aunt Juliet is not to hear or know anything about it—eh?'

'No, right! no!' cried he, calmed at once, and halting suddenly. 'Then he turned again to the stranger—'I really cannot express to you how grateful I am, sir. My name is Father Conroy, I am parish priest here, and this child is my relation, and especially under my care.' He held out his huge hand as he spoke.

'My name is Ansdale,' returned Chichele, taking the hand more cordially if possible than it was offered, 'Chichele Ansdale, and I assure you it is a real pleasure to me to have been of any service to Miss Mauleverer. I am awfully wet, though,' he added in a very plaintive voice, diverting with his own Father Conroy's eyes to his mud-stained boots and leggings.

Marion was standing close by, looking at neither of them. Father Conroy had never shown the slightest inclination to move towards the house, and the door behind the group remained open in a rather inviting manner. Before, however, Father Paul had time to say anything, Kitty Macan appeared at the end of the walk. She did not distinguish the group too clearly, what with her failing sight and the intervening apple boughs which overhung the path. But her cracked Clare brogue rang in their ears unmistakably.

'Miss Marion! I say, Miss Marion! your dinner is sitting waiting on you dis hour and more, and Miss Gertrude is gone up to pick de primroses. You is to go after her at once, miss, up to de wood.'

No one paid any attention to this, so Kitty, shading her eyes with one hand, advanced to find out the reason of this extraordinary disregard of herself. As soon as she

the pleasure of calling upon you, sir, and I hope you will do me the honour to dine with me.'

'With pleasure, indeed,' replied Chichele, speaking with unusual vivacity. 'I should be delighted above all things to come to dinner any day.'

They were crossing the bridge now, and the beggars and loungers were bowing and curtsying on all sides. They were so pleased and astonished to see Father Paul and the strange young gentleman together that they never dreamt of asking either for anything. They knew all about the latter. His name (though they could not for their lives have pronounced it) and lineage had been familiar since the morning, and numerous and varied were the encomiums now lavished on his 'elegant shape,' 'beautiful clean skin,' and 'lovely sootherin eyes.' This last, it may be said, came from Peggy Lehan, as great a critic and sound a judge of beauty as perhaps any Academician that ever lived.

Father Paul came to a halt before the hotel door. He thought his companion was some stray sportsman, who had come down for the fishing, and who in consequence must be stopping therein. Chichele looked inquiringly at him.

'I will come and see you, Mr. Ansdale,' said his reverence, in reply to the look. 'I hope Mrs. Fagan makes you comfortable, and I will settle a day at your own convenience for you to dine with me.'

'I am not staying at the hotel,' observed Mr. Ansdale. 'I am at Barretstown. I am visiting my cousin Lady Blanche.'

Father Conroy's countenance expressed such blank astonishment that out of pure curiosity the young man left him to speak first.

'Good heavens!' he burst out at last. 'Is it possible? My dear sir, indeed!'

'I shall be only too delighted,' Chichele resumed, in his former easy tone, 'to accept your invitation.' He had noted the altered expression of his would-be host's face, and dreaded a change of front. 'Any day,' he added, 'will

suit me—any hour. I am quite at liberty. We are merely a family party on account of my cousin's mourning. Besides, my visit will not be a long one.'

'I could not'—Father Conroy spoke with difficulty—'it is very unpleasant to me to come into—to have anything to do with O'Malley. The fact is, there is a family feud between him and my young relatives yonder. I naturally take their part. 'Tis a sore subject, sir—'tis a very sore subject.'

'I have heard something of it,' replied Chichele quickly and very earnestly. 'I assure you I sympathise deeply with you. I do indeed,' he added, looking frankly into his companion's face. 'Of course I am a complete outsider—a mere connection of O'Malley—and only here for a short time. I should greatly like to see you again—and also to see Miss Mauleverer.' He stopped now. Father Paul was gazing at him half blankly. Chichele doubted if his attention or thoughts were even following his words.

'I should like to see her again,' he said boldly. 'I hope she will be none the worse of her adventures to-day.'

'You *shall* see her again,' replied the old priest heartily: he had come down to earth, and was listening once more. 'You shall—she shall dine with us. Yes, I trust we shall all meet again.'

They had reached the Chapel House by this. The green gate of Father Paul's garden hung wide open.

'And you are at Barrettstown, at Barrettstown,' said his reverence moodily. 'It may be the finger of God,' he added *sotto voce*; 'but it is seven years and more now since Tighe O'Malley and I had anything to say to each other.'

Here he sighed profoundly, and frowned even deeper than before, then abruptly laid his hand upon the gate.

'Step in, Mr. Ansdale, sir, and accept of some refreshment from me.'

The young man was prepared for this invitation, and had decided to refuse it. Chapel House had no special attraction for him. He felt languid and weary now in mind and body. So he replied:

'Thank you, it is quite impossible. I must get home

as soon as possible. I am late, I fear, as it is. But,' he added, changing his tone, and looking straight into Father Conroy's face, 'I shall hear from you, shall I not?'

'Certainly,' replied his reverence effusively, 'you shall hear from me to-morrow at latest. Good-bye!' He lifted his biretta, which was brown with age and ragged at the corners. Chichele acknowledged the salutation fittingly, and they parted.

CHAPTER XV

‘Therefore there is no better way to moderate suspicions than to account upon such suspicions as true and yet to bridle them as false, for so far a man ought to make use of suspicions, as to provide as if that should be true that he suspects, yet it may do him no hurt.’

MRS. COURTHOPE had resigned herself with as good grace as she could muster to the day’s programme as arranged by Lady Blanche. Ever since she had heard that there were three young people of the age and attractions described so foolishly and unnecessarily by Mrs. Marchmont, she had felt some uneasy indefinable sensation, a foreboding she afterwards called it—concerning her brother. Chichele was to her a most important personage. The only brother among a number of girls, the head of the house of Ansdale since his father’s death, the heir to Lord Ansdale’s title and estates, he had claims enough to warrant consideration, and she, woman-like and sister-like, exaggerated them all.

Lunch was over, the letters all despatched, and a couple of callers engaged Lady Blanche. These were distant cousins of Lord MacAnalley, who had come to pay a visit of condolence, and Mrs. Courthope thought she would employ her afternoon more agreeably than in hearing the recital of the illness and death of the defunct earl, which was sure to form the staple of the entertainment. So she put on a walking-dress, strong boots and gaiters, and with a shepherd’s crook or alpenstock in her hand, started out, ostensibly to meet the fishers returning, in reality on a tour of observation.

She made her way down the drive to the entrance gates,

and graciously accosted the woman from the lodge who came to open them for her.

'Nice afternoon,' she said affably, standing still instead of passing through the gate.

'Tis lovely, my lady,' replied the lodge-woman.

'What a pretty lodge you have there,' she said, noting with pleasure that it was situated in a deeply-shaded corner of the wood, rather back from the gates, so that consequently the inhabitants had no view whatever of the road outside, and that she could take her observations unseen.

'Tis so, your ladyship,' was the answer, not too cordially given, for the lodge-woman thought it a grievance that she was obliged to sacrifice her pig and hens for the sake of such mere prettiness as flower-plots.

'How many children have you? What a nice little boy!'

A white-headed child had just appeared at the door, peeping shyly round the jamb.

'Deed he's in a great mess, my lady. I had no time this while to clean them at all, wid expectin' the family home to the great house. How many have I, is it, my lady? I have five alive, and three more of them in glory.'

'I suppose that means eight,' thought Mrs. Courthope. 'That is a large family,' she said aloud. 'And tell me, have you any neighbours? Who lives in the house by the chapel?'

'That will be Father Conroy's your ladyship means. There is no other house between this and Barrettstown.'

'No other!' repeated Mrs. Courthope. 'Then what houses are there on the other side of the river?'

'There is Quirke's, the farmer that has all the grazing land on the other side. His house is that long thatched cabin as you go down to the first bridge, my lady. I can just point it to you.' She passed out as she spoke on to the gravelled circle before the gate, but Mrs. Courthope's eyes were not following her outstretched arm. She stepped outside after the woman, but she had turned her gaze to the opposite bank, and was surveying the cluster of buildings there.

'What place is that now?' she questioned airily.

'Dat, your ladyship—dat's de Fir House, and de old mill-house it used to be.'

'Fir House, oh, indeed!' Mrs. Courthope put up her gold eye-glass, and surveyed the edifice in question. 'Oh yes, and—who lives over there?'

The lodge-woman's face assumed a very curious expression, had her questioner but seen it; but she was too busy inspecting the roofs and gable-end of the Fir House. A sharp suspicious glance at Mrs. Courthope's countenance proved to her informant that the lady had a hook concealed among her questions, and this was it now.

'Deed, my lady, thin, I don't rightly know, but 'tis friends of his reverence Father Conroy below dat lives in Chapel House. De very first house it is, your ladyship, on dis side, round de bend, so it is.'

Mrs. Courthope laughed internally. 'Doesn't know!' she repeated to herself. 'How Irish, and then this lapwing manoeuvre to get me off to Father Conroy!'

'I know,' she remarked a little sharply; 'but what is the name of the family?'

'Well, my lady, to tell you the rale trut, there is a great many people lives in that house, not that I have any recourse there, or knows wan in it. Sight nor light I never see of a livin' creature, your ladyship, outside me own door, barrin' go into dat town on me own bit of business, and himself is the quietest creature of a mankind, has no dalins nor recourse among anybody, an' me lady, any wan in this place, from his honor down to the humblest of people, will tell you the self-same thing. . . .' She stopped here for want of breath.

Mrs. Courthope listened to this tirade with a sort of mystified wonder, nodded her head, and walked off.

'Incomprehensible beings!' she murmured. 'That woman has evidently taken some extraordinary idea into her head, whatever it may be; but if she credited me with murderous designs upon the interesting inhabitants of the Fir House, she could not have shown less desire to aid or abet me.'

She walked quickly until she reached the Chapel House, slackened her pace there, and surveyed without much profit its rather uninteresting frontage. She decided not to go into the town. On starting out at first she had vaguely thought of doing a little amateur private detective work, but the result of her first essay had not encouraged her. It was evident that these people had no proper sense of their position and their duty to their betters. The lodge-woman's manner showed that—not that she was not civil, but it was not the manner proper to her place.

The poor lodge-woman's behaviour was simple and natural in the extreme. She of course knew who lived in the Fir House, and she knew equally well the Mauleverers' affairs in all the details of that melancholy and much-regretted history. It was a debateable subject still in the under-world of Barrettstown, the great majority believing that the Mauleverer children were the lawful owners of the Castle and the estate, she and her husband among them; but Tighe O'Malley was their employer, and to breathe the name of Mauleverer within earshot of him or 'any of his faction' was more than she would dare to do. Hence the lapwing manœuvres—as Mrs. Courthope termed them—to the strange lady from the great house. Besides, she suspected that her questioner knew who lived there as well as she herself did, which was indeed, as we know, the literal fact, and she was unable to connect the questions with any matter beyond her own personal range. How could she tell but that the lady would report to his honour anything she might say and get her into trouble! She determined to say nothing, which she did, as we have seen, after her own fashion.

Mrs. Courthope crossed the bridge, and walked on and on up the grass-grown cart-track until she came abreast of the Fir House gates. These were closed, but the side door was not. However, she could see nothing through it save a rank growth of evergreens. She did not dare to pursue her investigations further, much as she would have liked to, and walked on over the planks that crossed the mill-race. Then came a piece of marshy ground. There was nothing

on this save some gray geese. After that the path led into a wood, and the river narrowed so that the spreading boughs of the lime-trees on both sides almost met each other across it. Tighe O'Malley had told her that the heronry, which was close to this, was a very pretty bit. Captious-humoured as she felt herself to be, she agreed with him. The glimpses of bog and blue sky, with the mountains in the distance, which the breaks in the wood allowed to be seen, were very wild and lovely. She accosted a boy who was trotting homeward with a bundle of sticks on his back, and asked him if he had seen a gentleman fishing.

'Yis, ma'am. I did, your ladyship,' he replied. 'Tommy Walsh an' the gentleman are coming down above on this side of the river.'

'Thanks, thank you, my boy,' she answered very graciously, turning to walk on.

'They are after losing a grand fish. So they are !' added the boy. His eyes were glowing with excitement, and he seemed bursting with the news.

'Oh, oh, oh !' was all Mrs. Courthope's answer, accompanied by a valedictory nod as she quickened her pace and got away from him. He looked after her with an air of wonder, not unmingled with disgust, then tightened his hold of the bundle of waste wood and resumed his trot homewards.

The exact weight of the lost salmon as well as that of the captured grilse, and every detail of the playing and landing, every word that Tommy Walsh said to the gentleman, and that the gentleman said to Tommy Walsh, was known to the open-air clubs on the bridge and hotel porch before the heroes of the said adventures reached the town on their return.

Before very long Mrs. Courthope met her husband accompanied by the gamekeeper.

'I know all about you,' she cried. 'You have lost a grand fish.'

'Who? How do you know that?' he exclaimed.

'Oh, a boy with sticks! if I had not been in a hurry I should have heard a great deal more.'

'Walsh,' said Mr. Courthope, 'there has been no one near us all day!'

'Deed was there, sir—a chap pickin' sticks. He followed us all day, an' I could not get him to go off.'

'He did not ask for anything, did he?'

'Laws, no, sir! All he wanted was to see the sport.'

'After all,' remarked Mr. Courthope, 'he probably had nothing better to do.'

She took her husband's arm and fell into step with him. Walsh strode on in advance with the rod and basket.

'Hay!' ejaculated Mrs. Courthope suddenly. 'What have we here? Jack, look!'

He obeyed, and they saw among the trees close to the edge of the path two black-robed girls standing. One very tall, gracefully-built creature shrunk back a little on meeting the strangers' eyes, the other gazed at them, half shyly, but curious. They had been gathering primroses, and had their hands full.

Mrs. Courthope slackened her pace, and pulled her husband's sleeve to make him do likewise. 'What eyes!' she ejaculated below her breath—'and the hair!'

'Good evening!' she ventured, in her most silky voice, halting just in front of the two interesting strangers. 'Beautiful evening, is it not?'

'Good evening!' faintly responded the elder of the two, with a slight inclination forward of her head, after which it seemed to be more loftily carried, if possible, than before.

'You—er—belong to Barrettsdown? Do you live in the neighbourhood?' She added the question a little awkwardly, for a sudden thought had entered her mind, and was gradually suffusing her whole consciousness. These were—must be the Mauleverers. She was startled out of her self-possession, and the grave, reticent bearing of the two girls in no way contributed to reassure her.

'What a lovely place this is!' she hurried on to say. 'The river is so beautiful. We have been fishing.' She was actually reddening.

'I hope you have had good sport,' said the younger

girl, sympathising all of a sudden with the strange woman's embarrassment.

'Oh, yes! capital—that is—Jack?'

'Well, it has not been very remarkable,' said Mr. Courthope, speaking to Gertrude. 'I managed to get only one, and I lost a twelve-pound or fourteen-pound fish just below here.'

'I know,' said Gertrude impulsively. Her lovely topaz-coloured eyes lighted up and glistened. Then, meeting his admiring glance, she blushed vividly, and hung her head a little. 'The hole just at the upper bend. There is always a fish there.'

'Good evening,' said Mrs. Courthope now. Her husband lifted his cap.

'Good evening!' replied both girls, as gravely and unwillingly as at first, and they both turned their backs and walked in the contrary direction.

'Marion! Marion!' said Gertrude, 'was not that a beautiful dress? And was not *he* nice?'

'How dared she speak to us? Gertrude, what did you mean by answering that man? Aunt Juliet will be furious. You had no business to answer them, encouraging them in their impertinence. How dared that woman accost us like common people? Now, listen, if ever you meet her again, don't dare to answer if she speaks to you, and if she bows, you are to take no notice. Gertrude, do you hear?'

'I hear you—sure enough.'

'I will tell Father Paul of her impertinence, and you will see how angry he will be. Do you imagine that she would dare to stop any one else and ask them where they lived and who they were in that manner?'

'Oh now! you need not exaggerate——'

'Not a word—not a single word more. You have disgraced yourself and every one of us. To answer that woman was the behaviour of a beggar child—yes—a beggar child of the town.'

'It's all very fine,' and Gertrude began to cry. 'I shall just tell Father Paul that you were at Lambert's Castle to-day, and that you came home with a strange gentleman

from Tighe O'Malley's, and he was in our garden. Now, Marion, and you know nobody is allowed in. See what Father Paul will say to you.'

'He knows it already—and that has nothing to do with you.'

They set off home now, Marion leading the way quickly, pale and disquiet of look, Gertrude weeping and lagging behind.

If Mrs. Courthope had succeeded, which she acknowledged herself to have done, beyond her wildest expectations, she nevertheless felt a slightly uneasy sensation concerning the close proximity of this remarkable family to Barrettstown Castle. She wondered if her brother had or had not seen that very striking-looking girl—she could not bring herself to pronounce the word 'beautiful' in her own thoughts. He had not answered very candidly that time yesterday afternoon when the subject was under discussion. He had such odd ways. Perhaps it was all a mistake on her part; she might have imagined something. She was so accustomed to manoeuvring, to watchfulness; and she had made mistakes before. At all events, she assured herself that she must take the greatest care not to fidget or fuss him in any way—to observe him closely, and above all silently, for the next few days.

'What lovely creatures those girls are! And so they are the grandchildren of the man whom O'Malley succeeded!' observed Mr. Courthope.

'Not grandchildren—his nephew's children—or said to be. The little girl is lovely, if you will. I never saw such exquisite hair and eyes in my life—pretty, half-foreign way of speaking also!'

'Hum! The elder is a superb creature, infinitely more beautiful. The eyes and brow remind me of Lady Moss-towers.'

'I prefer the little girl,' said Mrs. Courthope candidly 'Her eyes are quite astonishing, that clear golden hazel, and the gold lights in her hair are wonderful.'

They had reached the demesne gate, and Mr. Courthope asked the lodge-woman if Mr. O'Malley had returned yet. She answered No, so they walked on.

'Where is Chichele?' questioned his wife.

'I don't know anything about him. He left us this morning, and went off by himself.'

This information furnished Mrs. Courthope with matter for meditation. However, she said nothing. She knew better than to impart her distrusts to her liege, who, tired and hungry, walked beside her in silence. When they came at last to the house she went for a few minutes to report herself to Lady Blanche. The visitors had all departed, and she was sitting with her dogs at the fire. The London and Dublin newspapers were all opened, the tea-table still standing by her chair. Mrs. Courthope debated with herself whether she ought to mention having seen the Mauleverers while describing to Lady Blanche the weather and her impressions of the scenery out-of-doors. Her first decision was in the negative. However, a moment later she reflected that, if she did not, her husband would be sure to, and, for that reason solely, she thought it as well to mention the matter.

'Do you know,' she began, 'I think I have seen those—er—poor little creatures of whom we were speaking the other evening!'

'Eh, who, dear?' asked Lady Blanche, who was slightly drowsy.

'The Mauleverers, you know.'

'Oh, oh indeed! You saw them. How did you recognise them?'

'Well, of course, it is a mere surmise, but I was walking up to meet Jack on the other bank, and close to Fir House—er—that old mill building, you know. I came on two young girls. One seemed to be about twelve, the other older—about perhaps sixteen or so.'

'She is nearly seventeen,' observed Lady Blanche, with a half sigh. 'Well?'

'They were standing quite close to the path, plucking primroses, and I—er—just said "Good evening."'

'You have been *speaking* to them!' exclaimed Lady Blanche.

'H'm! well, I just casually addressed them. They barely answered, I confess.'

Lady Blanche smiled a smile that said, 'Served you right!'

'What is the eldest girl like?'

'Oh, well, striking-looking certainly. Tall, very slight, but promises to be a fine figure. Very pale oval face. The eyes were fine, particularly so. Jack quite raves about her. I prefer the sister my——Oh! Chichele, you startled me. I had no idea you were in the room.'

'I have been in the room for at least six minutes. Ida, who is this person whom you describe in such hyperbolic terms? I am really quite on fire to know who she can be. Blanche, tell me, is she coming to dinner to-night, eh?'

'Oh! that's a question indeed.' Lady Blanche jumped up and looked at the tiny clock. 'Seven, half-past seven, though. Ida, Chich dear, let's all be off to dress. You can hear the rest later on.'

She hastened away. Mrs. Courthope rose to follow her. Chichele made a pretence of catching her dress as she passed.

'Ida, I say! I must know Ida, I shall not sleep all night unless I know.'

She eluded his grasp and fled, pretending to laugh as she went.

'What is up?' said Tighe O'Malley, who at that moment entered, and whom she passed. 'Oh! everybody gone to dress, eh? Chichele, where did you spend the day? Just as well you did not go fishing as it turned out. I rose one. That's my tale. Courthope, it seems, got a grilse, and lost a fish.'

'Better luck another time,' replied the youth sympathetically. 'I had a splendid walk, nearly got into a bog-hole, and made the acquaintance of some of the aborigines——your parish priest among them.'

'What! Father Conroy?'

'Yes, Father Conroy,' repeated Chichele, 'and he has

asked me to dinner—that is to say, he means to do so, and I——’

‘You don’t mean to say you’ll go?’ interrupted Tighe, laughing loudly.

‘Rather! why not, pray?’

Tighe burst into a fresh fit of laughter, then suddenly pulled out his watch, and went away to dress. Chichele followed his example.

CHAPTER XVI

' If thou rememberest not the slightest folly
That ever love did make thee run into,
Thou hast not loved.
Or if thou hast not sat as I do now,
Wearying the hearer in thy mistress' praise,
Thou hast not loved.
Or if thou hast not broke from company
Abruptly, as my passion now makes me,
Thou hast not loved.'

CHICHELE was strolling up and down the terrace next morning after breakfast, enjoying the air, and digesting the morning budget of news. It was near eleven o'clock; the sun was high in the heavens, and everything seemed to be growing and spreading itself in the warmth. All the leaves were larger; every flower was wider spread; the grass seemed a brighter and a richer green. He turned round on reaching one end of the terrace, and caught sight, as he did so, of a queer-looking figure of semi-sacerdotal aspect, approaching by the drive. He watched. Presently the new comer seemed to perceive him on the terrace, turned, and diverted his steps towards him with every appearance of assured confidence.

It was the chapel clerk, a half-simple soul whom Father Paul maintained, in spite of his absolute inefficiency, and whom he considered to be the most dignified bearer of his letter of invitation to Mr. Ansdale. The clerk had seen the young Englishman walking with Father Paul through the village, and knew his appearance and name as

now well as he knew the contents of the envelope, which he handed to him with a profound bow and flourish of his hat.

Mr. Ansdale took the letter with an impatience which he had difficulty in restraining.

'I will send the answer,' he said; 'thank you very much—stay.' He plunged his hand hastily into his pocket, and extracting thence a quantity of loose silver, gave it to the messenger, stopping his mouth, whence began to flow a torrent of invocation by way of thanks, by literally turning and running away.

'You need not wait—thank you—I shall send the answer by my man,' he cried over his shoulder.

Once in his own room, he sat down at the writing-table and opened the letter. The paper was stamped with the address, 'The Presbytery, Barretstown,' in coloured letters. Its substance was as follows:—

'DEAR MR. ANSDALE—Will you give me the pleasure of your company to dinner to-night at six? I should apologise for the shortness of this invitation but that you told me you were at liberty to come at any time, and that the duration of your visit here was short.—Believe me to be, my dear sir, most truly yours,
PAUL CONROY, P.P.'

'To-night at six,' repeated Mr. Ansdale, 'delightful! it is better than I expected, by far.'

He wrote hastily an acceptance, summoned his valet, and despatched it immediately. Then he went to the morning-room to find his relatives and impart the intelligence to them. Lady Blanche was writing at her table, Mrs. Courthope reading a novel and playing with her pug.

He took his stand half unnoticed on the hearth-rug. A wood fire was sparkling in the polished brass grate, fine as the morning was, and the pretty little room felt over warm. The heat drew out the scent of the flowers, of which there were a quantity. A great dish of white narcissus stood on a table near. Chichele stooped and inhaled the rich perfume.

'I—er—want your permission to dine out, Blanche,' he said slowly, 'to-night.'

'Yes, dear, of course, why not?' she made answer, scarcely having understood him, and without raising her eyes from her letter.

'Dine out!' cried his sister, 'why? where, pray?'

'I have accepted an invitation to dinner at the most unholy hour of six this evening, with your neighbour, the famous Father Conroy.' Though he took this tone of persiflage, it was not with too much confidence that he made his statement.

'Chichele!' uttered both ladies simultaneously.

'Yes!' he responded very deliberately, 'I have taken quite a fancy to him. I met him out yesterday; we had a walk and a talk, and really he is quite a good sort. I am to meet the school inspector—he said something about a bishop, but I am not sure that he is to form one of the party. I really am going. I would not miss it for the world.'

There was an indication of resolve in these last words which Mrs. Courthope's ear caught. She knew how far she might go, and for a moment debated within herself what course to take. She lifted the pug dog into her lap and pinched its ears, staring intently into his goggling brown eyes as though she hoped to extract counsel from their tawny depths.

'Dear Tippoo, good fellow!' she purred caressingly. 'Chichele dear, would you hand me my book, that one in the wicker chair, the third volume?'

He moved towards the chair indicated, selected the book, and handed it to her. She turned its pages over aimlessly for a minute or two, then broke forth, 'Chichele, really, dear, after what you were told about this parish priest the other night, do you think you ought to go to dinner, dear?'

'Told about him the other night, eh? What was I told about him? Blanche, is he an enemy of Barretstown? Are you at mortal feud, faction-fighting, eh, with old Father Paul? Must I take the O'Malley side, and refuse hospitality at the hands of your enemy?'

Dear boy, what nonsense! Father Conroy is a most

excellent creature. He took the part of those poor children, those Mauleverers, against us—a little, I think—but they are in some way connected with himself—I can't tell how, I am sure—and what has that got to do with your dining with him? Go, certainly. Ida, why should he not amuse himself?

'Since you give me leave, why not indeed?' he replied, with his semi-ironic manner. 'I am studying this charming country, and grasp every opportunity which presents itself.'

He left the room as he spoke, casting from the door a mocking smile in his sister's direction, which she encountered with a gaze of petulance and disapprobation mingled.

'Blanche,' she said, after an interval of moody silence, 'do you ever see those Mauleverer children, as you call them?'

'No, I should like to, and I should like to do something for them, poor things! But you see their attitude is—well—so uncompromising. If their aunt were only out of the way, I feel sure I could manage Father Conroy and the children themselves—poor creatures! I hear they have all their father's fascinate good looks. As it is, what can be done? They maintain that they are the legal heirs. They can't prove it—unfortunately for them—fortunately for us. So—there you are!'

'And so they just go on living in that queer ivy-grown house on the other side of the river? Do you know then that these *children*, as you call them, consist of a couple of as handsome *young women* as I ever met in my life? If the boy is to match, the brood is truly unique. I had not time yesterday to tell you as much as I wished.'

'Oh! nonsense!—why—well, I have not seen them for years. I may almost say I have never seen them, for really I had merely a glimpse of the creatures when I came here after our marriage six years ago. They promised to be tall, I recollect, and were extremely dark, almost like mulattoes.'

Mrs. Courthope smiled at Lady Blanche's expressed disapproval of swarthy as opposed to fair good looks.

'Six years makes a great deal of difference, dearest.

The young ladies' complexions are now beyond all reproach. The eldest is a great tall creature, taller by some inches than Augusta Trefusis, and vastly better looking—regal looking, I assure you—I was perfectly astonished. I did not have time to describe them fully to you; Chichele, I recollect, interrupted us. They were gathering primroses in that clump of trees just above their house. I never was more astonished in my life. The tallest, the grown-up girl, was the shyer of the two; the younger chattered quite confidently to Jack—spoke very well indeed. She has a quaint semi-foreign sort of accent, and that and her brogue are exceedingly pretty. So was she—fine features, magnificent hair and great dark eyes with curling lashes. The elder one stood quite still and silent, but to all appearance not the least bit out of countenance. She is, or will be, a magnificent creature, and looks fully eighteen.'

'Dear me,' sighed Lady Blanche. 'I hope they will both enter convents,' she added, after a pause. 'In their position good looks are no benefit. Luckily they have Father Conroy. I am told he worships them, and has adopted them all. I don't really see what we can do. Tighe pays all their school fees, although they go to Roman Catholic schools, which is wonderful for him—I am much more liberal than he—and they live rent free.'

'I wonder,' began Mrs. Courthope, 'if that Father Conroy has not arranged a meeting between Chichele and this girl to-night. I have a presentiment that there is some scheme underneath this invitation to dinner.'

She turned her keen eyes with a significant look which was utterly wasted on Lady Blanche.

'Scheme! Ida!' she repeated indolently. 'What can you be thinking of? Quite unlikely!'

'*Nous verrons, nous verrons*,' reiterated Mrs. Courthope, lapsing into French because a page was that moment crossing the room to take the post-bag. This little bit of caution was unusual with her, and was indicative of her frame of mind. It was quite superfluous, and had the effect which that particular precaution invariably has, namely, of hanging out a flag. The page repeated downstairs that 'they' began

to talk French as soon as he opened the door, and, as a natural consequence, everybody pricked up his or her ears. Mrs. Courthope dropped the novel and pug simultaneously and went to the window. The lovely landscape was looking its best and freshest, but she was in no humour to admire it.

‘What brought me here? what possessed us to come here?’ she asked herself petulantly.

But at that moment steps crunched on the gravel. A groom led a long-legged, well-bred-looking horse past the terrace, and before she had time to think, or even realise this vision, she saw her brother bound on to the animal’s back, and then without an instant’s delay trot round the house and out of sight. She opened the window and went out on the terrace. The drive was deserted. He had evidently taken the back road through the shrubbery and gone towards the Dublin Road gates.

‘I wish he were safe back in London!’ she breathed. ‘That tall girl was exactly what he admires, and in a poky dull little place like this who can tell what may happen?’

CHAPTER XVII

'A generous mind is of all others the most sensible of praise and dispraise; and a noble spirit is as much invigorated with its due proportion of honour and applause, as 'tis depressed by neglect or contempt. But 'tis only persons far above the common level who are thus affected with either of these extremes. . . .'

CHICHELE was punctual in his arrival at Chapel House. Six was the hour appointed for dinner. The angelus was sounding from the convent bell as he walked up the garden leading to the parish priest's residence, of which the hall door was wide open. He knocked twice, and finally decided to enter the hall. He had scarcely done so when the messenger of the morning, the chapel clerk, appeared at the head of the kitchen stairs, clad this time in a long rusty old soutane, and wiping his mouth with its sleeve. A grin of delight shone in his countenance when he caught sight of the visitor.

'Your honour! I ask pardon for not hearing you knock. Will I take your honour's hat and coat?'

'This is the major-domo, I suppose,' thought Chichele, as he was divested of his hat and coat. These the clerk hung upon a rack which was already pretty well encumbered, then threw himself upon a door at the right hand of the hall and announced the arrival.

Four people arose simultaneously and noisily at his entry. Father Conroy grasped his hand and shook it as he might that of a friend of twenty years' standing, then he introduced one after the other his three friends, the school inspector, the doctor, and the bank manager. The first, a

pleasant-looking man dressed in a travelling suit, bowed and sat down again, by the latter act permitting Chichele to confirm a terrible suspicion which had invaded his mind as he entered the room, namely, that the company was limited to the male sex.

Doctor Daly, an unhappy-looking man, with a most careworn expression, although he was still young, was next presented and shook hands with Chichele. He was a typical dispensary doctor, not even entitled to be styled doctor, not much more than half trained or educated, and wretchedly paid, half his available income, which did not amount to three hundred a year, swallowed up by the expense he was forced to incur for horses and vehicles. He was the doctor of the Barrettstown district—a post worth one hundred and forty pounds a year. His wife, the daughter of a 'wholesale dealer' in Dublin, had brought him a dowry of eighteen hundred pounds. Father Paul had not invited her to dinner because Miss Quin was to come in the evening. Mrs. Daly's dignity, as the daughter of a wholesale dealer, forbade her to associate with the daughter of a 'retailer.' The Mauleverers knew nothing about her. Miss D'Arcy visited no one, and the children's acquaintance was confined to a few school companions. The only people in the town whom Mrs. Daly considered to be her social equals were the bank manager and his wife, and as she had quarrelled with this last, she was reduced to the society of her home circle, consisting of her two babies and her husband.

Father Paul was in no way displeased to be rid of the society of these ladies. Children like the Mauleverer girls and Honor Quin, and some other of the same standing, he did not mind, indeed rather liked. Adult women, married or single, it was his avowed opinion, were, on the whole, the great plague of existence.

Chichele remained standing. He placed himself on the hearth-rug in front of a great turf fire, facing the door, so that if any one entered he must see who it was at once. The conversation became general—the host alone scarcely spoke. Father Paul had postponed his dinner three hours

exactly, and was now feeling more exhausted than hungry, only it would never have occurred to him to describe his sensations by those terms. He took huge pinches of snuff, and offered his box to the company.

'Sit down, my dear sir,' he cried, when Chichele declined black rappee, and he pulled forward a large arm-chair covered with haircloth, slippery and prickly of aspect.

'Are we to wait for Father Collins, eh?' he said, in response to a whispered message from the clerk. 'No, no! who waits for curates? Gentlemen, I lead the way. Mr. Mauleverer doesn't count. He is at home here.'

Suiting the action to the word, Father Paul strode off, followed closely by his guests.

'Mr. Ansdale, you will sit by me,' he said, indicating a chair close to the head of the table. When the other guests had seated themselves, Ansdale observed that there were two vacant places.

'How you have cheated me!' he murmured to himself, apostrophising his host, as he took the appointed seat. Like Father Paul, he was in need of food. He had spent the day on horseback, exploring the country north of Barrettstown Castle, and, notwithstanding the disappointment he had just suffered, found himself enjoying a slice of a splendid salmon which Father Paul dispensed liberally.

'No salmon in the world to beat a Barrettwater,' said the doctor.

'They *do* allow themselves to be caught, then. Our people have been whipping the Barrettwater for three days in vain,' remarked Chichele. 'My brother-in-law took a poor grilse yesterday.'

'This salmon,' replied Father Paul, in his simple grave voice, 'was a present to me then. You, Flaherty, could tell its history, no doubt.'

The bank manager, who was the person addressed, turned very red, and then exchanged a wink with the doctor.

'I did not kill it, Father Paul,' he made haste to say. 'I have not been out with a rod this long time. Sorry to hear your friends have not been successful,' he said, address-

ing Chichele; 'they ought to try the deep pools above the weir—not the Quaker's weir—a couple of miles higher up, at Archer's Ford.'

'Mr. O'Malley knows the river, I fancy,' replied Chichele, a little dryly. 'I am not very fond of fishing; I prefer hunting or shooting.'

At this moment the door opened, and a tall figure appeared.

'Godfrey, child!' said Father Conroy. 'Why are you never in time? Come here, take this seat. Mr. Ansdale, this is Miss Mauleverer's brother Godfrey.'

Godfrey bowed shyly, as he took his seat opposite the stranger, to whom indeed he needed no introduction to make him known; his lineage was stamped upon his face. Marion's brother, he must and could be no other. Delicate, beautifully-cut features and long sweeping black brows were fitly framed in a narrow oval face. The skin was olive like hers, but not so transparent nor white, and the great dark eyes were wilder, more unresting of expression. Everything—the clustering rings of black hair, the curved lips, and the tall slender figure—recalled Marion to Chichele's mind. He could hardly keep his eyes from the boy's face; his admiration was plainly visible to Father Conroy, whose face shone with pride and delight.

'How is Miss D'Arcy to-night?' questioned Father Paul, filling the boy's glass with wine as he spoke.

Chichele strained his ears for the reply. Should Godfrey speak like the men at table, with the same coarse voice and accent, he could hate him. No, it came in the same half-foreign tones, as musically distinct.

'An exquisitely beautiful creature!' thought Chichele, 'thorough-bred every inch of him, but as wild as a hawk.'

'Oh! no change since you were there this afternoon.'

'Did you bring the girls' music, Godfrey, as I bid you?'

'Yes, yes!' he answered. 'I brought it and them too, altogether, Father Paul.'

He began to eat his dinner, daintily though hungry.

'Do you fish? Do you care for sport?' Chichele asked, thinking and much desiring to make friends.

Godfrey looking at him as if startled at the question, replied, 'No,' lowering his eyes half shamefacedly to his plate again.

'The river is preserved,' thought Chichele, 'and that salmon which we have just eaten had a history, most undoubtedly, from the remarks of these gentry; I was ill-advised to allude to the subject.'

One or two attempts which Chichele made to lure him into conversation failed completely. He could not extract more than a monosyllabic answer reluctantly pronounced by the shy youth. The other guests addressed several observations to him alike in vain. A shadow seemed to have fallen mysteriously upon Godfrey.

The inspector was sitting close to Chichele. He began to talk to him, and after a few preliminary remarks said, 'You are at one of the Universities?'

'Yes, Oxford—it is my last term.'

'I wish I had gone to one of the English Universities. I have a Queen's University degree—but the other——' he sighed.

'What difference is there? you stand pretty much as we do.'

'I don't mean in that light,' returned the inspector. 'Intrinsically I suppose the degrees mean pretty well the same thing. But the residence, the training, do so much for a man. You get the nonsense knocked out of you—the petty narrow notion—"provincial" does not describe them—"parochial" is nearer to it.'

'Everybody cannot have an English University training,' observed Chichele, 'and for that matter lots of fellows talk as if the Continental University systems were better. How very close and warm this room is!'

A dinner of the most voluminous description was steaming and smoking on the table; roast ducks mingled their odours with those of boiled chickens, ham, lamb, and beef. Everybody was hungry. Chichele observed his fellow-guests' capacities with wonder. Godfrey Mauleverer ate nothing in comparison with them, Father Paul's petting and protestations notwithstanding.

The cloth removed, Godfrey murmured something to Father Paul, who replied aloud. 'Your head aches, child? Yes, you can go, of course. The other room is cooler. Marion and Gertrude are there, did you not tell me?'

The name Marion and its suggestion of her immediate presence startled Chichele as a flash of lightning might have done. Marion there—Marion in the next room! When had Godfrey conveyed this intelligence to Father Paul! He had not heard a word of it.

A huge tray was laid at this juncture before the last-named. Jugs of boiling water, lemons, basins of sugar, great stalked glasses each containing a desert spoon, were scattered about the table. Chichele watched these preparations in terror.

'Father Conroy,' he said, on seeing Godfrey rise quietly from his chair, 'I never take hot whisky and water. Would you allow me to accompany Mr. Mauleverer?'

'Stay and take a glass of wine—eh? Mr. Ansdale! won't you? No?—dear, dear! Then, just as you like.'

Godfrey Mauleverer stood at the door outside, and held it until Chichele passed through.

The school inspector turned to his host as soon as the door had shut upon the young men.

'What a fine tall fellow your young relative has grown! I saw him once before, three years ago. How quickly he has shot up!'

'He is the makings of a splendid fine man, but he is growing too fast, I think,' said the doctor.

Father Paul sighed profoundly, acknowledging both remarks by a nod.

'Well, well, to be sure!' he said. 'I wonder if that English lad is over twenty; he looks to be about that. He has the advantage in many ways,' Father Paul added slowly. 'Godfrey is talented—the children are all that. I sent him to St. Peter's Diocesan College—it was so near home, just about four miles from us—this five years, but I don't know what to say. He shows no taste for books—won't think of a profession. I wanted him to be a doctor.'

'Godfrey!' ejaculated the dispensary doctor. 'To be sure, why not?'

'The médical,' returned the old priest, 'is the only profession which, thanks to the Cardinal's wise arrangements in Dublin, a young Catholic can take to without danger to his faith.'

'Ah! You of course disapprove of mixed education,' said the inspector.

'I do,' answered Father Paul. 'I would rather see Godfrey dead than exposed to the danger of losing his faith, Mr. Macaulay. My grandfather was shot by the soldiers of a Protestant sovereign. My own brother is an exile for his devotion to a Catholic fatherland—an exile—an outlaw. It is not for me to give into a godless system of education devised by aliens and conquerors for the further enslavement of my country—no, sir!'

'I am able to appreciate your feelings perfectly,' answered the Presbyterian. 'But this is a sad state of things, and our promising young friends are liable to suffer. Now, there are a great many Catholics in Trinity College.'

'There are. I know it—the children of the Dublin Roman Catholics, the meanest, most cringing creatures that ever disgraced their faith and country. It is those people who destroy the prospects of this country, who give the lie to our demand for liberal education in a Catholic University.'

Mr. Macaulay waited until this thunder had rolled away. 'That may be so. Of course, it is a sacrifice of principles, but don't you think, sir, that the Catholics, being confessedly backward in the matter of education, ought to grasp at every opportunity, no matter by whom presented, of improving their intellectual position in the country? They *are* behind, you know, and so you *must* get teachers. Well, where are you to get them?'

'The Penal Laws are to blame that we have no Catholic teachers,' grumbled Father Paul.

'Well, granted, granted! How do you intend to create teachers? Where are you going to begin? You don't want to stand still.'

'The Church must be obeyed,' said Father Paul after a pause. 'That is the first condition.'

'Certainly,' said the dispensary doctor.

'Mind, I don't dispute your position in the least. I too am an advocate of denominational education. I only point out to you that, by refusing these existing means of education, you are retarding your own cause. And moreover, Father Conroy, why is this? You want a University. Yes, and you ought to have one. But why is it that with a Government grant of thirty thousand a year for Maynooth, the hierarchy did not make a Catholic University then?'

'Maynooth is not a University,' said Father Paul.

'I know that,' responded the inspector, 'very far from it, but I cannot see why it should not be. Thirty thousand a year is a large sum of money.'

'It cannot be diverted from its original purpose.'

'Of course, of course!—though I don't think Government would cavil. I only state my private views. Don't you think, also, that you are just a little hard on the Dublin professional men? They feel their own defects of education, and wish to place their children on a higher level. Come! having made sacrifices in their own persons, it is too much to ask them to victimise their children.'

'The fact is,' said the doctor; 'if I had gone to the Queen's College or Trinity instead of the Catholic University, I'd be in a very different position to-day.'

'You are in a very good position to-day, I think,' said Father Paul good-humouredly.

'It's all very well, Father Paul,' answered the doctor sulkily, 'but I've been passed over, over and over again, for men who disobeyed the Church or went to the godless colleges. Look at my sacrifices, all gone for nothing. The Cardinal goes and——'

'Daly, man!' said his host, interrupting the doctor's recital of his grievances, 'ring for hot water, and let me see you do credit to that whisky.'

'The school-book here does not show that your local gentry take much interest in the schools.'

'They never set foot inside the door. Tighe O'Malley

is manager—by way of—I never knew him to enter the place. Certainly, he is better than others. When I was building the new church he gave the site and about twenty pounds' worth of wood. That chapel cost twelve thousand pounds, sir; nine thousand came from America.'

'True!' said the doctor, 'and it is the people who built that church that are helping to keep the whole of them. The money that comes to this town from America is uncountable.'

'How did they live without it before?' inquired the school inspector.

'Things were different. Before the potato disease you could buy twenty-four or twenty-five pounds of potatoes for a penny. There was more land in cultivation. They reared pigs and fowls in a way they can't attempt now. Land is almost all in grazing. There is little or no employment. We have not your industrial resources in the north, Mr. Macaulay. We have nothing but agriculture.'

'True, but agrarian crime and political agitation don't exist in the north. Capital has been deterred from embarking in any enterprise by this Fenianism.'

'Now, I ask you, sir, who are those capitalists? What is to hinder O'Malley with his five or seven, more or less, thousands a year, all earned by these people, from capitalising a small part of it and setting going a mill—there's water-power enough and to spare in Barrettwater, and employ these poor people who, through no fault of their own, are idle!'

'O'Malley would like a manufactory set going, but he would like an English or Scotchman to come and do it. He does not want to be better off; he cares for nothing but amusing himself,' said the dispensary doctor. 'You see, he is not too bad at all as landlords go. He has not raised the rents since he succeeded. To be sure a good many of his best tenants are leaseholders, and, indeed, for that matter a round score of leases will be soon falling in. We'll see if he'll not show his teeth then.'

'If he did not raise the rents he has pretty well cleared out the estate,' said Father Paul; 'but he will not stop at

that. Did you notice the ruin of the old cottages along the road as you come in from the train? Yes. Well, that place was once thick with people before the famine. Heavens! I recollect the famine well. I went out that road one morning early—it had been a bad wet night—I met six dead bodies by that ditch. How many died in the fever or at sea I don't know, but I know this—Tighe O'Malley's uncle, Mauleverer, shut up the house and went abroad, and left the creatures to rot there. He did that,—and then came home and evicted the survivors! You see, the rates were heavy, and for that matter, sooner than pay rates, Mauleverer used to—and Tighe O'Malley does the same—offer a man up to ten or twenty pounds to give up possession of his place and either move into the town or go to America with his family. As fast as he or his agent, Marchmont, can get hold of a cabin, "Level it" is the word. The people who have the river-side cabins here in this town are letting lodgings in them to the labourers at sixpence and eightpence a week, for room to lie on the floor—the cottages are so scarce outside Barrettstown.'

'Ay!' said the doctor, 'and fever is never out of that same part of the town. The cabins are as wet as mud, built in the old river-swamps.'

'Fever should be prevalent,' said the inspector.

'Oh, faith, for the matter of that, when you are called to a case, the safest thing to say is, "I think you have typhoid fever." In ninety cases out of a hundred it turns out true, and I may say that all over this country that rule holds good.'

'Have you a bad landlord?'

'No, not at all as they go,' returned the doctor. 'O'Malley never interferes at all, and if he is asked for anything gives it at once.'

'Not that we trouble him much or often,' added Father Paul, with considerable bitterness in his voice. 'He takes seven thousand a year off the county Cork, and barring the labourers employed in the gardens under his Scotch gardener, and the helpers in the stable under the English stud groom, and the English coachman and the English

steward, what does he do for Barrettstown any more than he does for Cusheton West, his Limerick estate? Nothing, Mr. Macaulay, nothing; nothing on earth but take the money and enjoy himself!

'Divil blame him!' said the dispensary doctor, who, with the aid of the hot water and sugar, had been doing credit to the whisky. 'Wouldn't we all enjoy ourselves if we could?'

Father Paul gave utterance to a huge peal of laughter. He, also, had a strain of Greek in him. He also was given to despise the small things of life.

'Mr. Macaulay,' he cried, 'take a glass of claret. Light another cigar, sir! The doctor has given us a good sound prescription. Your health, Dr. Daly! Enjoyment to you, man!'

'Thank you, father! I go with you. I agree with Lord Cork, the beggar-man. "I would not change," he said, "with the King of Spain once. I have my dinner taken—what difference is there between him and me? *He* can't eat two dinners, for all he is king, and I don't want two dinners. So what need have I to change?"'

'That is Lord Cork all over,' said Father Paul. 'Poor fellow! it's not twice a week he gets a dinner. He got mine once, though I wish it had been a better one for his sake! I was going off to a sick call—a hurried case—and he, knowing all about it, having seen me drive down the Limerick Road, marched up to the house and told Mary Johnston that I had sent him up to bid her give him my dinner. I was gone off to Clifton's, eight miles away—he had his story all pat enough—she believed him, and—Lord Cork made short work of my dinner!'

'Unfortunate wretches!' said the inspector. 'What an existence it is! It makes me melancholy to see the crowds of such creatures in all these southern towns.'

'Yes,' added the doctor; 'and the crowds of young ones growing up to the trade.'

'Well, well!' observed the inspector, 'the schools should see to that, but the managers are in fault. Now, at Newtown last summer—I went to Newtown to inspect a

National school—I recollect it well—it was a lovely July day—I found the door of the boys' school locked, and of all the pandemoniums ever you listened to, it sounded through the windows. At last some of the urchins heard me and spoke to me through a broken pane of glass.

“Where's the teacher?” I asked.

“Plase, your honour, he's gone up to the manager's to help in with the hay, and we're all locked in till he comes back.”

‘After this I went to the girls' school. That was impracticable also, and a buzz, not exactly that of bees, came to my ears.

“Where is the mistress?” I hailed at last.

“Plase, your honour, she's gone up to the manager's to give a hand with the washing, and she's locked us in till she comes back.”’

‘Oh, scandalous!’ said Father Paul.

‘Very well, but listen to this?’ continued the inspector. ‘My duty as inspector was to direct the said *manager's* attention to this state of things, and request him to see that it did not occur again.’

‘And it was the *manager* who was the cause of it,’ said the doctor. ‘That matches the old schoolmaster and his plan when they were about to introduce the National school system. It's close on forty years since. There were a number of gentlemen going about the country taking evidence; among others they fell in with an old schoolmaster in my part of Waterford, and they asked his opinion, would the people like a free school or a pay school best.

“Oh! he said, “they would not like a free school at all. They are too proud, too proud entirely for that!”

“Oh! then we had better arrange to make them pay something,” said these commissioners.

“Oh no, then,” replied the schoolmaster. “That won't do; they would object to pay either!”

“What does this mean,” cried the gentlemen, since you are after telling us they were too proud to send their children to a free school?”

“That is so, too!” said the schoolmaster.

"And what do you mean?" they cried. "What are we to do?"

"Well!" he made answer, "I have an idea of what it is that they would like, and what it is would suit them—myself, just!"

"Tell us, if you please," said the commissioners, they all being mightily puzzled.

"It is this, then, just—to make a fixed charge, moderate like, not *too* moderate; and then when the time came to pay, *to not ask them to pay!* not to *press* them to pay anything at all—just leave it to them, like!"

Father Paul laughed his great deep-chested laugh that made the whole room shake.

'You invented that, you villain—you made that up,' he said, at last.

'I give you my word of honour it is just what happened sir!' replied the doctor.

CHAPTER · XVIII

‘From lowest place, when virtuous things proceed,
The place is dignified by the doer’s deed. . . .
Good alone is good without a name.
She is young, wise, fair,
In these to nature she’s immediate heir,
And these breed honour that is honour’s scorn.’

GODFREY shut the door of the dining-room when Chichele had passed out, and then went to the open hall door, and stood silent and shy, his eyes turned away from the stranger.

A moment or two elapsed. Chichele was searching in the pockets of his overcoat, but at the same time noting his companion, and wondering how he could best set about overcoming his shyness and reserve. He felt drawn irresistibly towards the handsome, wild boy.

‘Cooler here, is it not?’ Chichele, in his resolve to make friends with this mute Antinous, took an easy conversational tone with him, hoping by degrees to break down the barrier between them.

‘Yes,’ Godfrey answered, then he turned from the hall door and opened that leading into the sitting-room. It was empty, to his manifest astonishment. ‘They are with Miss Johnston, of course.’

‘Let us smoke a cigar,’ said Chichele, who did not understand him; ‘we can go into the garden.’

Godfrey turned again towards the hall door, and they passed out on to the steps just as a couple of people were in the act of ascending the same. These were a loutish-

looking young man of about twenty, accompanied by a thick-set female figure shrouded in wraps.

'How do you do, Mr. Maulever?' she said in a formal voice, passing straight on, upwards and into the hall.

'Good evening, Miss Quin,' Godfrey replied, starting to one side. He nodded to the young man, who, taking off his hat in response to Godfrey's salutation, followed his sister.

'Try one of these,' said Chichele, holding out a handsome gold cigar-case. Godfrey extracted one clumsily, eyeing the case with naïve admiration all the time. Chichele struck a match and gave it to him, then lighted his own cigar and began to smoke it hurriedly.

'Who are those people who have just passed in?'

'Quins,' replied Godfrey, laconically.

'Do they belong to the town? farmers or what?'

'They belong to the town.'

'You have left school, I suppose?'

'Yes, I have left,' replied Godfrey very slowly; 'some months ago.'

'Were you in England, or in school in this country?'

'At Ossory College—it's about five miles out on the Limerick Road, but I always went across the bog, that's three, unless it was too wet. It might drown you then.'

'Yes,' assented Chichele, thinking of his own experience of the bog, 'I should say so. I saw snipe and ducks over there in Knockstuart Bog.'

'Yes, there are plenty there in the winter, and you can get them in flocks along the river at Archer's Ford, some miles higher up, where there is a lough; it is all over sedge and flags—covert, you know. I have seen hundreds. There are too many cranes, though.'

'Cranes? Do cranes come here?'

'Well, they are herons. They call them cranes here.'

'You have finished your cigar, I see,' said Chichele, throwing away the end of his own—he heard voices from within, and felt impelled to move. 'Let us go in; it is chilly.'

They entered the sitting-room together, where Marion

and Gertrude, Miss Quin and her brother, were now all assembled together. Chichele had eyes only for Marion. She was sitting in the window which looked out at the back into Barrettsdown woods, and did not seem to observe the entry of the two young men. She gave him her hand with a manner which seemed self-possessed and calm, but her eyes fell when they met his. She presented him to her sister Gertrude and to Miss Quin and her brother. Gertrude shook hands with him willingly, looking at him the while with the frankest admiration. Marion, having accomplished this ceremony, seated herself again in the window. Chichele turned round a horse-hair-covered chair, and first replacing an antimacassar covered with pink wool-roses, which had fallen off in the process, sat down beside her.

Godfrey let himself drop on to the sofa beside his sister Gertrude.

'Ah! Godfrey, my frock!' exclaimed she; 'and there now, you are ruining the cushion. Honor! Honor Quin, just look at the cushion you worked for Father Paul, your raised work cushion.'

She held up to view a square object of red satin with a bunch of thick soft pansies, each looking as if it were stuffed, and one-half of which had decidedly suffered by Godfrey's impact.

'Never mind!' observed Miss Quin affably; 'it does not matter, Mr. Maulever.'

'It does not matter?' echoed Gertrude. 'Honor Quin, I am surprised at you. This is the handsomest of all the cushions in the room. But Father Paul has twice too many cushions,' pursued she.

Chichele looked round the room as she spoke, and burst out laughing. It was the first time he had thought of noticing the surroundings. The room—it was the drawing-room—was a large square apartment with a waxed floor and a square of gaudy carpet in the centre. A coloured lithograph of Pius the Ninth hung over the mantelpiece; below it a French clock in a glass shade marked the hour, perhaps at New York, between two huge vases of wax fruit and

flowers, each likewise cushioned and sheltered under glass shades. Bead cushions, velvet cushions, wool cushions, all sorts of cushions and coloured wool things were placed everywhere.

'You ought to see Father Collins's room,' said Godfrey. 'He has slippers for every day of the week, and two pairs for Sunday. I told him he would want to be a centipede. The next time I go up there I shall take a pair for myself. Why does no one work me slippers? Quin, do they work slippers for you?'

'You are not priests,' observed Gertrude snubbingly. 'Here is the antimacassar I worked him at Easter—and just look,' she cried dismally, 'some one has slopped tea or something on to these nice roses.'

Marion and Miss Quin laughed, the latter very constrainedly, for she had on all her best clothes. She wore a heavy black silk dress, a bright yellow gold chain and locket, and she had retained her black kid gloves. She looked as stiff and immovable as the plaster-of-paris Madonna under her glass case on the chiffonnier, but was as usual self-assured. Her hair was dressed in a huge stuffed chignon, which was the admiration and envy of the Maul-everers. Marion's black tresses were all twisted in a coil on the back of her head; Gertrude's hair was plaited in a great cable that hung below her waist belt. Gertrude wore a white frock that had evidently been made for her in the village, and which accentuated her rich dark colouring. Her wild tawny eyes glowed with spirit. Chichele watched her with delight. She promised to be beautiful, perhaps more so than her sister. The soft child face had lines that promised a later beauty of no common order. She was evidently completely at home and at her ease, but there was plainly one person in the establishment whom she held in awe. A sudden clatter of tea-things was heard. Gertrude that instant resumed her seat on the sofa. The door flew wide open presently, and the housekeeper walked in carrying a large tray. The moment she came fully in view all the guests assembled with one breath said simultancously, 'Good evening, Miss Johnston.'

Miss Johnston, a grim dignified spinster, well over fifty years of age, was Father Paul's housekeeper. She also was in gala attire; she wore an extremely shiny black silk dress, and a black apron with red braided pockets. She was a priest's niece herself, and having been left destitute, owing to her relative having died intestate, had entered a convent. But her temper, which was remarkable, having been found to be incompatible with a religious profession, she left the convent. Father Conroy charitably appointed her mistress of the National school of Barretstown, which post, although her education was of the most defective kind, she retained until the school was given over to the new establishment of nuns whom Father Paul imported from the 'Mother House' in Cork. She then passed into his service, having attained a suitable age therefor. She was full of conceit and self-importance, a devotee, and a perfect Turk to the servants under her control, but a good creature in the main, and really devoted to Father Conroy and his relatives of the Fir House. 'Good evening,' she replied affably, directing her salutations exclusively to Marion, Godfrey, and Gertrude. 'Good evening, Miss Quin and Mr. Quin,' she added, addressing the brother and sister in a totally different voice. 'Miss Mauleverer, will you be pleased to make tea? The cake is coming.'

'No, no; let me!' cried Gertrude. 'Miss Johnston, I want to. Marion, I may.'

Suiting the action to the word, the vivacious Gertrude seated herself behind a huge Britannia metal tea-pot, and began to dispense strong tea and cream liberally. A dish of smoking hot cakes made its appearance, marmalade and honey in glass dishes; little pats of butter, with a round-shaped fat swan stamped on each, floated in a glass dish. Candles were lighted now, and a great white lamp which smelt strongly. Marion rose from her seat, and lifted a tall vase full of early wallflowers from a corner table. She placed this in the centre of the tea-table upon taking her place.

'I cannot take tea, thank you,' said Chichele, declining a cup offered him by young Quin. He rose from his seat

and moved to the music-stool before the piano, with the intention of being able to look at Marion's face as the candle-light illumined it. The same, yet different, he thought. More beautiful, if possible — clear cut as a cameo.

Her eyes looked black as she exchanged a glance with Miss Quin. The last-named had evidently directed her attention to himself. Chichele noted a side-long turn of her bechignoned head. They perhaps felt uncomfortable that he did not join them. He opened the piano suddenly, and announcing, 'I am going to play you something,' dashed swiftly into a waltz, whistling an obligato.

Gertrude, who was fond of music and easily moved by it, listened for a while, and at last, forgetting her tea, she left the table and came and stood by the piano.

'How *do* you play so beautifully?' she asked him. She leaned her arm on the top of the piano, and by degrees drooped her head on it, her eyes alternately watching his and the keys of the piano.

Chichele as he played watched the child's face with amusement. No kitten could be less self-conscious or wild.

'Gertrude!' cried Godfrey, 'Gertrude, I say, since you undertook to make tea, come and do your duty, Gertrude!'

He rose to help himself, but she darted suddenly back to her seat; a scramble for the tea-pot ensued, in the course of which the cream-jug was nearly overturned. Marion saved it, stretching out her rescuing hand quickly and deftly, while Miss Quin was gazing, as if fascinated, at its perilous condition. Godfrey seized his sister's cake, with the remark that the music would be enough for her. He had observed and was displeased by her naïve admiration for Chichele. This injustice recalled her to her usual habits of self-assertion, and she resumed her tea with new-found appetite.

The swinging rhythm of the waltz seemed to inspire the whole party. The Quin brother and sister thawed, and began to talk. Marion's face kindled into an expression

of happiness almost—she was listening to him with a delight and wonder that grew each moment—until it seemed to the musician to be perfectly radiant. The lamplight shone through the little soft curls that clustered on her temples, lighting them almost into gold colour. Gertrude, her eyes dilated and glowing, chattered, argued, and disputed. The cups were knocked violently into the saucers; knives and spoons seemed possessed by an unquiet spirit.

‘Let us send away the things and dance,’ ordered Gertrude, springing up.

‘Dance!’ echoed Miss Quin, dismayed. ‘What would Father Paul say?’

Gertrude’s answer was to ring the bell in a manner that no one save the master of the house had ever before attempted. The sacristan made his appearance and was peremptorily requested to take away the tea. He wanted to go downstairs and send Miss Johnston or a servant, but Gertrude refused to wait one minute, and helped him so effectively that, at the cost of two cups and a plate, the table was cleared in the course of a minute or two.

‘Honor Quin! since you will not dance, you shall play,’ she declared.

Chichele heard this, and brought his music to a sudden stop. He jumped up.

‘I want to dance. What shall we dance? Miss Maul-everer, will you dance with me?’

She answered yes by a look only.

Godfrey and George Quin were carrying the table to a remote corner.

‘That,’ said Chichele, indicating the square carpet, ‘ought to go also.’

It was flung aside in a moment. Honor Quin began to play a quadrille, with a touch as hard and measured as a steam-hammer.

‘What are we to dance—a waltz?’

‘A waltz—oh no! a quadrille.’

‘Why not a waltz?’ he pleaded. ‘This is so stupid; it is not dancing at all.’

But his opinion changed when he saw Gertrude’s method

of procedure. She danced with Godfrey first, and to his eyes certainly turned half of each figure into something that was much more like a round dance than a square. Then she exchanged him for George Quin, who danced as sympathetically as his sister played, and whom Gertrude certainly treated with most undisguised contempt. At last, tired of his awkwardness, she desired him to go and turn over the music for Miss Quin, and called Godfrey back, and he, entering only too willingly into her spirit of mischief, romped through the remainder of the quadrille as gracefully as herself. They danced a sixth figure, a kind of galop, whose existence was hitherto unknown to Chichele. Gertrude revelled in this, and insisted on dancing it three times over. Her curls floated; her long plait had come all undone, and her great eyes glowed with wild mischief and enjoyment. At last, exhausted, they stopped. Chichele turned to Marion.

'Sit there,' he said. 'I want to play *you* something.' He ran his fingers over a prelude to get into the key, and then began Chopin's waltz in A flat. Marion sat down beside the piano, and listened to him entranced, spell-bound.

'You could not dance to that,' said Gertrude, with a profound sigh, when the pathetic middle *motif* was over.

Chichele let his hands drop.

'Do you think music is only for dancing?' he asked.

'Oh no!' she said; 'but when I like it *very much* I want to dance, or to cry, one or other.'

'This is your sort, I think; but wait. Let us dance a waltz. Miss Quin can play one, I know. Do, please, Miss Quin, and you will see how little we shall turn round.'

But Miss Quin would not. So Chichele struck again into a waltz, alternately whistling or singing the German words, as he went along. Gertrude danced by herself; then Godfrey, who had opened the window and was leaning out of it, joined her. Finally, even Miss Quin began to dance. Chichele sought Marion's eyes, and signed to her to come and take his place at the piano.

'I want to go to the open window,' he whispered, 'I feel stifling; I shall faint if I do not go.'

He left the piano seat. She, without allowing the waltz to be interrupted, took his place. None of the dancers noticed the change.

Chichele's nerves were strained and irritated; he sat down in the window-seat, and opened the sash still wider. The room looked into Barrettstown woods, which spread themselves in a dark network behind. It was partly twilight yet. He could distinguish the stems of the trees, and he longed to be walking there among them, alone with his own thoughts. The night was warm and perfectly still; the air seemed loaded with the fresh faint fragrance of the spring flowers and the bursting leaves; it seemed to Chichele as if it breathed upon his cheek in regular unison with the rhythm of the music. If but she were with him, out in the open air, away from them all, among the woods! He could not see Marion's face now. Vainly he watched for her to turn her head even, and with a sort of rage of impatience he fixed his eyes once more on the wood. The dark mysterious alleys that opened among the branches seemed to draw him with an irresistible fascination. The great clusters of primroses at the roots of the trees looked like pale lamps set to mark the path. Chichele leaned his head on his hands, and drew in deep-breathed sighs of longing for the silence and darkness without. He felt that he could not even look at Marion in the presence of the rest—they all irritated him—the noise, the voices, the light, those fearful Quins, what were they doing in the same place with her! With her brother and sister?

The waltz stopped. Gertrude and Godfrey rushed breathless to the window. Godfrey leaped out on to the low wall at the back.

'Let us all run away into the wood,' cried Gertrude. 'Out of my way, Godfrey! Marion, come!'

It was an easy jump from the wall to the ground. She leaped out after Godfrey. 'We will go to the fountain in the wood,' she cried over her shoulder. 'Come all!' and away she flew.

Marion and Chichele jumped out almost together, and, without stopping for an instant, started in pursuit of Gertrude's flying white figure. Honor Quin and her brother remained behind, struck dumb, and afraid to follow.

'Don't run,' said Chichele, who kept pace with them. 'I know this part of the park; the fountain is quite close. Have you ever been here before?'

'Oh, yes! I often come in here to read; it is so dark and cool. At least, I did last summer.'

He and she were together; Gertrude's white frock flitted here and there among the tree stems like some nocturnal moth, then vanished from sight. At last even the sound of her voice ceased. They were in the thickest part of the wood. Neither spoke, and only for a bird which now and again chirped drowsily from her nest, the silence was almost oppressive. A tiny current of air swept down the aisles of the wood, smoothing out the wrinkles from all the little new leaves, lifting and scattering as it went the perfume cups of the flowers. It seemed to rise and fall like a pulse-beat as it caressed Marion's flushed cheek. They turned into a thicket of dwarf laurels, above which towered great majestic elms and Scotch fir-trees. They were near the fountain now; the splash and trickle could be faintly heard.

Neither spoke for a few minutes. Then Marion stopped. 'Where can Gertrude and Godfrey be?' she said. Her voice betrayed uneasiness, it was trembling. 'We are near the fountain.' She half turned, facing Chichele, 'We must go back.'

He also stood for a moment. The trunk of one of the fir-trees was just behind her, and half, more than half dark as it was, her face appeared to him distinctly and clear against its background. She seemed frightened all at once.

'If you will—immediately,' he replied. They walked rapidly back towards the thick hedge which formed the boundary of the wood. Then Chichele stopped. He thought he could hear footsteps coming closer and closer.

I must speak to you—stay only one moment. The others are quite near now. Hear me—I—I——' He

took her hand in his. She did not take it away, but he could feel it tremble. 'I want to see you again.'

She made no reply, but moved as if to go. He held her hand closer in both of his.

'I have a right to ask it. Do say you will let me come to see you—say I may—to your own house! I must go away soon, and cannot leave unless you——'

Still she did not answer. He bent forward nearer and nearer still, and looked into her face. 'Say you will let me come, Marion! say you wish to see me again,' he pleaded, stooping closer and looking into her face.

Some sign of assent he read there, for he lifted her fingers to his lips and kissed them reverently. Then without a word more both set off running as fast as possible, for Gertrude and Godfrey crossed the path as expeditiously and suddenly as two rabbits.

'Gertrude!' cried Marion, 'wait.' Her voice trembled—he could hear it.

'Make haste!' was the fugitive's reply. 'I see the window; they are all there now. 'Oh! what will Father Paul say? And he had the wall mended the other day.'

Godfrey burst out laughing.

'You never mentioned that until now, and it was you who tumbled down the coping-stone, and it was you who invited us all out of the window.'

'I did not. You jumped out first of all, and put it into my head.'

They were close to the yard wall now, Gertrude caught Marion's arm and pulled her to one side.

'Godfrey, go you and Mr. Chichele back by the window—say we are in,' she added significantly. 'We will run in this way.'

She unlatched a little half-door in the wall as she spoke, and vanished, dragging Marion with her, down a short flight of steps, which led to the kitchen and offices of the house.

Godfrey had hardly astonished the inmates of the room by tumbling headlong in at the window at one end of it, when a counter stimulant was applied by the two girls'

apparition at the other. Gertrude made straight for Father Paul.

'Oh, Father Paul,' she began, 'it was so hot here, we ran off to the fountain just, and we thought we should have had time before you came in. You have not been waiting long?'

'Dear, oh dear!' groaned his reverence. 'And now, Gertrude, did you break down that wall again? Mr. Macaulay,' he said, without waiting for her answer, 'this is Miss Gertrude Mauleverer, and Marion, Miss Mauleverer.'

The school inspector bowed to both.

'We want some music,' continued Father Paul. 'Are we not to have some music, Honor?'

'Ask Mr. Chichele,' promptly commanded Gertrude. 'Father Paul, he plays divinely.'

'I heard some very delightful music about an hour ago,' said Mr. Macaulay.

'Yes,' added the doctor solemnly, 'something quite superior.' The last speaker, together with the bank manager, had drunk considerably more than he ought to have done. However, both gentlemen had the grace to know this, and kept extremely quiet.

Chichele began a lively medley which caused them the most undisguised delight. He felt that he could go on playing all night. Gertrude sat quiet for a few minutes, then returned to the piano and resumed her attitude of entrancement, heedless of Honor Quin's rebukeful countenance and edifying pose.

Father Conroy was delighted. He loved music, next to cards, as a recreation, and Chichele's proficiency would have astonished him but for the fact that he was a cousin of Lady Blanche. Anything might be expected from people of that rank of life.

'I could listen to that music for ever,' his reverence murmured. His face had assumed an air almost of beatitude. 'Is it not delightful, Flaherty, man? Good God! can you be going to sleep? Does he not make it next to speak, the piano?'

Marion answered 'Yes,' compassionating Mr. Flaherty,

whose present existence was one continual struggle with the drowsy god. She had seated herself near the turf fire, now reduced to a straggling heap of white ashes with here and there a dull crimson in the mass. Father Paul had ordered it to be replenished on his entry to the room, but Miss Johnston wisely opined that it was too late to put on more fire, and calmly disregarded his behest.

Chichele had finished his medley, and Gertrude was imploring him almost tearfully to continue, when the priest's housekeeper walked in and announced to Marion that Kitty Macan had come, and that they had better not keep her waiting.

Marion rose at once. Father Paul had heard the message, and summoned Gertrude to get ready. She left her post unwillingly, but obeyed, and a few minutes saw them ready. Miss Johnston called to Kitty. The familiar sound of the umbrella and the big shoes was heard in response to the summons, and Kitty appeared.

'I was waiting for you, ladies; Miss D'Arcy is in a hurry for you to be back,' she observed, then as her eye fell on the Quins, who were taking leave at the same time, 'Deed, den!' she added wrathfully, 'I did not know you were to have company—gentlemen—to convoy you home! Good-night, your reverence! Miss Johnston, good-night to you, ma'am!'

They all went out after Kitty, who, grasping a big stable-lantern in addition to the umbrella, led the way down the steps sidelong and with great deliberation. Chichele longed to go with them, but dared not. He took his place beside Father Paul in the hall and said boldly, and on purpose that he might hear it, to Marion and Godfrey as they passed, 'I shall see you to-morrow afternoon.'

Godfrey answered with a nod, accompanied by a look of astonishment. Marion said 'Yes,' and passed on hurriedly.

'Don't come until past three,' said Gertrude, 'when I shall be home from school. Promise! Mr. Ansdale, please, won't you?'

Father Paul said not a word to this. He patted her head as she passed by way of good-night. Godfrey brought

up the rear of the party. Young Quin loitered behind and joined him. His shyness had disappeared now, and he had found his tongue.

'What a swell that Mr. Ansdale is!' he began to Godfrey in a low grumbling voice, as soon as the girls who were headed by Kitty Macan had advanced beyond earshot.

'Yes!' said Godfrey absently—he was not listening in the least.

'He looks as if we were all dirt under his feet,' pursued Quin. He stopped a moment to see if Godfrey were going to resent this spiteful coupling together of the Mauleverers and the Quins. It was a totally unfounded proceeding on the part of George Quin, for Mr. Ansdale had certainly shown no wish to treat the Mauleverers with any such implied disdain. Not a syllable of comment came from the dreamy youth. George Quin went on:

'It's a queer thing to hear a man play the piano like that. He does it as well as if he got his living by it. I hear he will be a lord when his uncle dies. Jim Cadogan says the aristocrats are all brainless and stupid, and don't know what to do with themselves, and that's what makes 'em take to such bad courses. Sure what call have they to care for any one? Can't they do what they like that has loads of money and has no one to answer to? I don't believe a word Jim Cadogan says. This Ansdale is no fool, and the Lady O'Malley herself up there is as clever a creature as ever lived—paints pictures, and does needlework for the furniture, that don't look very foolish either.'

George Quin, after the fashion of his kind, resented the superiority of Mr. Ansdale as best he knew how. His sister Honor resented it also, and was by no means unmindful of the fact that this much-admired young man had never once spoken directly to her during the whole course of the evening—that was not astonishing, for anything to equal the forwardness and 'unrefinedness' of Gertrude's behaviour she had never beheld in her life. The more she thought of it the worse it seemed. She was going to early mass at the convent next morning, and as the head of one of the 'sodalities' found it her absolute duty to

bring Gertrude's derelictions to the knowledge of the class-mistress, one Sister Mary Augustine—of renowned strictness and severity.

Godfrey was not listening to George Quin; the wind carried the unpleasant croaking voice away towards Barrettstown, and dropped it into the ranks of nettles and docks by the wayside.

'Quin,' he said, after a few minutes' silence, 'are you going up to the meeting to-night on the Hare Mountain?'

'Faugh!' was Quin's reply. 'Deed I'm not! What do I care about it?'

'You joined!' said Godfrey.

'I know I did. What of that? I subscribed, too, and regularly. What more does the "centre" want of me? The fact is, Mauleverer, what do I want with it? I don't believe in the thing a bit. It's all very well for you to drill and work as you do. I subscribe and I attended a meeting or two, and I go with them in a way because you see it's my side, and if I'm going to be a barrister it is a good thing to have a back and to stand well with the popular party. It will get me on, don't you see. It's pure business to me. But what good is all this dam drilling and marching and hiding and tricking? Lord, man! if you had ever seen London, as I have, you'd laugh at the whole thing. But these farmer fellows know nothing—a most ignorant pack.'

They were at the Quins' door—the shop was shut long since, but even had it been open, the young Quins preferred the private door—and the two families exchanged farewells. The Mauleverers crossed the bridge and took the river path home. Godfrey took Gertrude's arm, and made her walk beside him and quickly. Marion was hastening on in front. Kitty Macan ambled behind as fast as she could.

'Oh Lard!' she cried out piteously, finding herself distanced, 'Miss Gertrude, don't go so fast, jewel! don't, jewel! now, I'm afeard!'

Godfrey halted and began to laugh at her.

'What have you to be afraid of, Kitty?' he giped. 'The "good people" will take care of you. It's not every old woman in Barrettstown pays them the attention you do.'

Gertrude, she is in a hurry home to get the kitchen ready for them.'

'Dat they may catch you—you young divil—you, some night, an' give you a crammer as you go up the stair.'

Godfrey shrieked with laughter. Gertrude caught him by the arm angrily.

'What did you want to say that for? Can you not let her alone, Godfrey? I will tell Father Paul of you—tormenting the poor old thing. Aunt Ju is waiting up for the prayers, so hurry, Godfrey, do! Don't push me so close to the water's edge.'

'Dere you go!' muttered Kitty, apostrophising Godfrey from behind; 'you mad thing, you! tro' the poor child in the water, do! Oh my God! dare is just one rale Maulever in our house. Curse of Cromwell on all deir breed, seed, and ginerations. Now, I am after cursing, so I am. Lard! I renounce the sin of it, I do!'

Marion had arrived before them and was leaning against the gate pillar. The black overhanging tufts of ivy almost hid her. She was gazing across the river to where the road turned into the great gates of the demesne.

'What are you looking at?' Godfrey asked.

'Can you see any one over there?' added Gertrude. 'Oh, I can!' she cried. 'Mr. Ansdale, good-night!' she called aloud.

'How dare you, Gertrude!' Godfrey stamped angrily. 'I think you have behaved dreadfully to-night. I never will go out with you again. Go in at once—walk before me.'

Gertrude hung her head, pouting but obedient. Kitty Macan produced a huge key, and a few minutes saw them all, save, as usual, Godfrey, engaged in their customary evening devotions.

CHAPTER XIX

‘For martyrdoms, I reckon them amongst miracles, because they seem to exceed the strength of human nature, and I may do the like of superlative and admirable holiness of life.’

It was Saturday, the day of the week which circumstances conspired to render the most important of the seven in Barrettstown. It was market-day, and the day for hearing confessions in the chapel, and moreover it was the day the American mail arrived *via* Cork—the day on which it usually arrived, for there was always a spice of uncertainty about it. Sometimes, when westerly winds prevailed, the letters had arrived on Friday night, and were lying waiting for their owners in the pigeon-holes of the post-office. Again, according to the time made by the steamer, they would be delayed until Sunday morning, thereby arousing bitter anxieties, distrust, and suspicion of all kinds in the hearts of their expectants.

Barrettstown was about two and a half hours’ distance from Cork, as the crow flies ; but the railway station being nearly three miles away from the town added another half hour, at least in point of time, to the intervening space. The railway station took its name from the town, a compliment which the latter barely deserved, for so far from appreciating the benefits which railway communication with Dublin and Cork was to confer on them, the townspeople, when the projectors and builders of the railroad announced that it was to run through Barrettstown itself, had risen in rebellion against them, and agitated to such good purpose

that the railroad company altered the route of their new line to a point three miles to the eastward of the town. The village shopkeepers and wiseacres of the day rejoiced ; as even to the present time, while allowing the disadvantages of having to pay cartage on goods, they rejoiced in having placed a bar in the way of people going to Cork or Dublin for their shopping. To look at the customers as they poured, with their donkey-carts, from all the converging roads, one would imagine that there was not much fear of their straying so far afield. The main street was full of these little vehicles, each in charge of some member of its owner's family, who had strict injunctions to watch its contents, though the same might consist only of the movable seat and the wisp of hay intended for the donkey's repast. Barrettstown market was by no means in too good repute for honesty ; it was a matter of history that Hannah Fagan's ass had had a bran new head-stall stolen off him while she was engaged at the chapel at her 'duty.'

Barrettstown bridge was thronged with people. The dwellers in the river-side cabins, the squatters on the bog and common, and the beggars, had taken their stations upon it early. The first comers had secured seats on the stone coping of the balustrade or a vacant place to lean against. The others strolled uneasily to and fro. It was the open-air club of the leisure class—by far the largest portion of the inhabitants of the town, and they had it all to themselves to-day. The pigs and goats who, on the other days of the week, and all day long on Sundays, had the freedom of the bridge in common with the other citizens, had retired to the side lanes, and the geese had let themselves slip down the river with the current, and were trying the pastures among the water weeds below. They were almost full feathered again ; the time for their autumn plucking was not far off, and they had renewed their plumage since January, at which inclement season they were usually inconsiderately stripped and turned naked—and ashamed of themselves—on the winter world.

It was a most delicious morning. There had been a few showers in the night, just enough to bring out the sweet

odours of the new leaves and blossoms. The chestnuts of the main street were just breaking out into their first bloom, and the whins were yellow on the stony ground at the edge of the Limerick Road. A smell of new grass came up from the fields in the reclaimed ground, but it was lost or stifled in the tobacco smoke and the odours of turf with which the bridge was reeking.

It was at once the cheapest and best day to buy butter and fowl, and afforded also an opportunity of meeting acquaintances and hearing the news. The bank, the hotel porch, Quin's shop—from which last the noises of tearing calico and the thumping of bales on the counters sounded all day long—were full to overflowing with busy people. The idlers were the larger number, and they, with the beggars, were on the bridge. Lord Cork's large figure loomed prominent among the ragged fraternity, side by side with Andy Lehan, his wife Peggy, and a host of others. Peggy was on the look-out now for customers, for another of her avocations was to keep places, like Mrs. Feelan, at the confessionals for parishioners who came from a distance, and who could not afford time to wait for their turns in the ordinary way. Peggy Lehan was as comfortably employed, dozing on the form in front of Father Paul's or Father Collins's confessional, as gossiping on the bridge, or crouched over her own or a neighbour's turf fire. So she kept a sharp look-out for her clients' donkey-carts, and only lent vicarious attention to the conversation going on between her husband and Lord Cork, as they divided a black pipe between them. It was the Saturday before the last Sunday of the month, so that she had not much chance of an engagement save from one of the young women of the decenter sort who went to weekly confession.

'Sarvice to you, ma'am!' Peggy hailed a blue-cloaked country-woman, who was pulling a heavily-loaded donkey after her by the nose. 'Sarvice! A lovely day we're having, ma'am.'

'Good day to you, good woman,' was the reply. 'Good day. I have nothing for you now. Look for me as I go home;' and walking backwards with a watchful eye to her

straw-packed property in the cart—for the bridge was a well-known resort for pilferers—the country-woman went her way.

Her cart was followed by an outside car, drawn by a shaggy, long-tailed mare, sadly in need of grooming. A stout comely-looking woman was driving; on the opposite side sat a demure pale-faced girl. Peggy Lehan darted forward at once, and ran down the road to meet this conveyance.

'Sarvice to you, Mrs. Ahearne, ma'am. Miss Mary, God look on you. Will you be willing I go up and keep a seat for you above at the chapel to-day? Just to oblige you, Miss Mary—save you!'

'Yes, Peggy,' replied Miss Mary, 'you may. I'll be there in an hour or so.'

But as she spoke a woman who had been for some time crouching at the end of the parapet ran forward and accosted Mrs. Ahearne.

'God save you kindly, Mrs. Ahearne, ma'am! I hope all your good family is well. I am sent to tell you Mrs. Talbot is not expected to pass the day, and she is wishful to see you, ma'am.'

'What is this you tell me, Mrs. Smith? Stop,' ordered Mrs. Ahearne; 'is she so bad as that? Not expected—eh?'

'She was 'nointed last night, ma'am, and she will never pass the turn of the day. She is wishful to see you, ma'am, and I am waiting on you this hour.'

'Let me down off this car!' was Mrs. Ahearne's answer. She got down at once, and went round the back to where her daughter was sitting. Peggy Lehan delicately withdrew, and took her way back to her post.

'Mary, go on to Quin's and put up the beast; I'll be up in a while. *That's enough.*' This last meant that Mary was to be silent as to the cause of the delay.

The car moved on, and Mrs. Ahearne turned to her guide and signified to her to lead the way. They left the high-road and turned down a side street, if a double row of filthy cabins deserved the name. A sort of rough cause-

way ran down the middle of this, and for the whole length of it, at either side, the refuse of the houses was thrown to fester as it chose. Pigs, lank and uncleansed of aspect, rolled and wallowed in the half-liquid dirt; and elfish children not a whit more cared for bore them company. Mrs. Ahearne held down her head and picked her way among the muck heaps. These did not trouble her much, but she did not like to be seen by the inmates of the cabins. There were very few of them, however. Most of the women were in the market-place; the men were at work or lounging on the bridges or in the main street. Bad as this street was, it was by no means the worst. At right angles from it ran several narrow squalid lanes of ruinous cabins, dark, sunken, or tumble-down of aspect. At the turn of one of these the guide paused.

'Tis the third house, Mrs. Ahearne, ma'am. You will excuse me going farther. I have a young child sick below, and I must go to him.'

'I thank you, Mrs. Smith, my good woman, thank you kindly,' said Mrs. Ahearne, turning towards her guide, and as she did so inclining herself a little. The other made a suitable acknowledgment, equally graceful and well-bred in its way, and they parted.

For one moment the farmer's wife stood still, and surveyed with a look of mingled disgust and fear the truly horrible spectacle that lay before her now. At the top of the lane, which sloped upwards somewhat from the street, was the one slaughter-house of Barrettsdown, and the gutter, or rather the track worn by the feet of the inhabitants down the centre of the passage, which was not six feet wide, was the receptacle of the waste offal and blood from the shambles. They had been slaughtering on the day before, and the usual loathsome evidences strewed the ground everywhere, bits of offal gnawed by dogs and pigs, and a hideous red stream, partly dried and filling the air with its revolting odour, marked the line of descent all the way. The place was never cleaned, and every week there was a fresh supply from the slaughter-house of the same fever-breeding material. Fever hung in every sodden, reeking

wall, and made its permanent abiding-place in the rotten thatch, which in many places was sinking between the rafters, in others had in parts gone altogether. It had rained in the night, and the sun-heat was now drawing up an unpleasant dank steam. Mrs. Ahearne made the sign of the cross to ward off sickness, for, like every one else, she knew that fever was in one of every three cabins in the place—but she was not afraid of that. Nor indeed was she solely occupied with thoughts of the unhappy woman whom she had come to see. A boding anxiety that had been growing and strengthening for years, until from a faint distant foreshadowing it had become an imminent terror, possessed her mind, and every repulsive feature of the place she stood in served but to intensify it.

'Oh, my God!' she kept repeating, 'have mercy! If I were to be put in this place!'

As she passed an open cabin—there was no door, and a fume of turf-smoke was coming out—a gaunt half-naked creature with wild eyes came forward, holding out a yellow skinny hand, and leaning out pleaded, 'The price of a bit of bread, and God keep *you* from want and desolation all your days.'

Mrs. Ahearne said 'Amen' with genuine fervour, and put a few coppers in the hand: it retreated once more behind the smoke, into which some blessings speedily mingled themselves.

She was at the third house now. A confused sound of voices came out. She listened for a minute before she stooped to enter, and recognised the prayers for the dying. The wretched dwelling, more like the lair of an animal than the abiding-place of human beings, could only be entered by a sort of hole not above three feet high, and once inside she had to step cautiously, for the place was almost full of kneeling and crouching figures, and the sudden change from light to darkness made her unable to see.

Peggy Feelan, who was evidently presiding, and was 'giving out' the prayers, stopped as soon as she recognised the visitor, dismissed her congregation with a wave of her hand, and advanced to do the honours.

‘Mrs. Ahearne, I am proud to see you. Mrs. Talbot is very wishful that you would call to see her.’

Mrs. Ahearne paid no attention whatever to Peggy Feelan’s words, but advanced to the side of the dying woman, whose bed was placed so that a faint ray of light fell on her face from an unglazed window at the back. It was like a wax mask—so pallid, so transparent was the skin that, as she lay with her eyes closed, Mrs. Ahearne asked herself if she were not too late after all, and glanced questioningly to Peggy Feelan.

‘It is only a little slight sketch of a sleep that is on her, ma’am,’ observed Peggy Feelan with her professional air.

If the outside of the house was wretched, the interior for naked misery far outdid it. The bed on which Mary Talbot lay was a make-shift contrivance of sticks and boards, tied here and there with ropes. The covering baffled all attempt at description. Furniture there was none. Some cracked and broken delf utensils were placed in chinks of the ruinous wall, on which some one had long ago fastened pictures cut out of weekly newspapers, now all blackened by the turf smoke. Fire there was none. A creepy stool, half a firkin and a kish, or wicker-basket, was all that was visible; but round the wall was a sort of continuous litter of straw, crumbled turf, and heather boughs, and it was plain that Mary Talbot was by no means the only inhabitant of the place. When Mrs. Ahearne saw this last evidence of misery and all that it implied, and thought of the beggars on the bridge, she clasped her hands under her cloak and wrung them with anguish, while drops of cold perspiration gathered on her forehead.

‘Sit down, ma’am,’ said Peggy Feelan, advancing the half firkin to the bedside. ‘She’ll rouse out of dat now immediately, you’ll see, ma’am.’

The dying woman had been a youthful friend and companion of Mrs. Ahearne’s. Their parents had been neighbours; they had both married farmers, and settled in the vicinity of Barrettstown on the Mauleverer estate. The Talbots’ farm was a poor one, and they had no lease—only

a promise from Godfrey Mauleverer that he would not disturb them so long as they paid the rent punctually. Low as the rent was, the only son had to go to America to help to earn it. Once there he sent for his two sisters, as soon as he could pay their passage, half out of a desire for their company, half because he knew it would be a change for the better in their circumstances. The American fever, as the old people of the Southern Province not inaptly called it, was raging at the time. There was no political movement in the air to absorb the adolescent energies of the boys and girls. The Young Ireland rebellion, if that effervescence deserve the name, never very deep-rooted or more than partial in its influence, had passed by in a rainbow-hued mist of poetical effusion. America was on every lip. The letters from the emigrants were a hebdomadal stimulus, and all that Helen Talbot could do or say was bootless to keep her children beside her. They all meant to return; they wrote faithfully and sent home money. One, a beautiful girl, married an officer of the United States army, and until the death of Godfrey Mauleverer all went well with the Talbots.

But a new king arose with Tighe O'Malley. Talbot's farm occupied a piece of fenny ground by the river-side at one end of his park, and Tighe, a man of taste, held that it spoiled the landscape at that point. He was at the time busy making all sorts of improvements in view of his marriage to a nobleman's daughter from the North. Among these, Talbot's farm must be thrown into the new ornamental grounds near the heronry. To give him his due, Tighe was personally incapable of wilful unkindness. He deputed all that sort of work to his agent. For instance, he owned the very portion of the town where Mary Talbot now lay dying, but he never set foot there, and Captain Marchmont was forced, through sheer inability to look at the misery and poverty huddled together in the lanes, to give Peter Quin a sub-agency over that portion of the property. Peter Quin deputed in his turn the task of collecting the rents to one of his own followers, a resident in the same place, and carefully abstained from going near

his tenants, whom his representative harried and ground as he liked. Thus three middlemen made a percentage off the rents before the lawful owner pocketed them.

Talbot's piteous plea to be allowed to die in the homestead that had been in the possession of his family for a hundred and seventy years never reached O'Malley's ears even. He rode round the park with his agent, gave his directions, and went off on the wings of love to London to resume his courting. There was no lease, merely a verbal promise, in no way binding upon Tighe. The agent, a straightforward Englishman, went to the Talbots and told them what was to be done. It was almost his first experience of the kind, and it was remarkable enough to make a lasting impression.

He told Talbot, in pursuance of Tighe's instructions, that he was to go, and to the outburst of despair with which this intelligence was greeted, thought it only his duty to tell the old couple that they had been and were paying a most preposterous rent for their sixty acres of the worst land on the estate—thirty shillings for swamp and two pounds ten and three pounds an acre for the highest-lying portion of the ground. He told them that no Englishman in his senses would give ten shillings an acre for the best of it.

'What's that got to do with me?' made answer Talbot, staring at him doggedly. 'Was I ever behind with the rent?'

'My good man, I wish half the tenants paid as regularly as you do; but it is to your own advantage to give up the place. You are robbing yourself, and robbing your children in America, paying such a rent.'

'I ask no better than to pay it and to keep the place that was my father's and my grandfather's before me. It is where I was born. I know no other place, and if I leave it I will die, sir.'

'Stuff, Talbot, stuff! Mrs. Talbot, you are a sensible woman. Advise your goodman here.'

Mrs. Talbot proved her senselessness by sinking on her knees at his feet, and imploring him in a voice broken by

sobs to intercede for them, not to drive them from their home. Where could they go to in their old age?

With an Englishman's horror of a scene Captain Marchmont left almost instantly. He was sorry for the evident distress caused to the poor fools, but O'Malley must be obeyed. So the notice was served. Talbot came to his office and offered to pay any amount of rent they might ask. His children would send it to him from America. He told the agent that they intended to come back with their earnings and live at the Heron Farm, that they had gone to America on purpose to earn money to keep on the place.

The evident sincerity of Talbot touched Captain Marchmont, and he wrote to O'Malley. The answer was that Talbot was to be offered one hundred pounds to go out quietly. Go he must. The house was to be pulled down, and the place was to be ploughed over, drained, terraced, and planted, as he had arranged, without further delay. Tighe was liberal, and desired him in addition to give Talbot his own valuation for the crops.

Talbot refused the hundred pounds and kept his word. He died broken-hearted, at a friend's farmhouse, who had offered him shelter during his last illness. The son in America died, and one of the girls—Mary Talbot always maintained of grief—and she was left alone in the world to end her days in the poor quarter of Barrettstown, and among the beggars. The people to whom she used to give alms now shared their dole with their once patroness. Always proud in her own way, although she was a quiet, pious woman, Helen Talbot sank into a kind of resentful apathy. For two years after she was forced to leave her farmhouse she never crossed the door of the wretched place where she now lay dying, not even to go to mass. She remained alone, though in a crowd, isolated as a prisoner in his dungeon. She would not solicit alms or aid from any one; she was ashamed to make known her wretched position. All her own relatives were dead or gone to America with the rest; and now, at last, her release from her sorrows and degradation was at hand.

Mrs. Ahearne had sat still watching her for some ten

minutes, when a tremor passed over the dying woman's face. Her eyes opened, and after a vacant look for a moment she recognised her visitor.

'Margaret Ahearne,' she said, 'that is you. I am obliged to you for coming to see me, and God bless you for your kind heart to send me tea and the things you did.'

'Don't speak of it, Helen Talbot; I blame myself that I did so little for you.'

'I have but little time, Margaret, very little time, now, and thank God for it! I can say I go with joy to my own people. I sent for you to forgive me for causing scandal. Yes, I turned my back on God himself for bringing me into this shameful place, herding me with the beggars. For more than two years I never went to mass, never bent my knee to a priest. I was ashamed to go out, I was ashamed to let the people see me. I hid myself as if I had done a wrong thing. Only that I felt death drawing near to me and warning me, I could be in my sins yet. I ask pardon.'

'Oh, Helen Talbot!' sobbed Mrs. Ahearne. She had fallen on her knees beside the bed, and laid her hand on the transparent wax-like one that lay on the cover. But her grief was not for the departing one: it was for herself. The same fate might be her own.

If Luke did not make a good match where would the money come from to renew the lease and 'fortune' the girls, and if the lease were taken from them, what was there before her but the same fate? Where could they get another farm? The idea of Helen Talbot's sufferings was oppressive; she who used to give to beggars reduced to their level now, she who used to be called ma'am, and handed chairs by the shopkeepers in the town, who had her own seat in the chapel, instead of having to herd standing among the poor women in the side aisle, to die now a beggar! Mrs. Ahearne well understood how and why she absented herself from mass and never went out. She would have done the same in her case.

'Tighe O'Malley drove me from my house,' began the dying woman once more. 'They tell me he has alleys and

walks, that the trees are growing where my house was—where I lived and reared my children. He has no child, and a stranger will enjoy what he has planted. He broke my husband's heart and my children's—just for a fancy, to please his lady wife—and he brought me here—here ! Oh, my God ! To die alone—among strangers !'

Peggy Feelan, who had never ceased to watch her, drew near and lifted the wasted figure up a little, for she was gasping for breath. Some occult sign from her reassembled the dispersed assistants. Some one lighted candles, and all knelt down silently with their eyes fixed upon the nurse, waiting the signal to recommence the prayers. Most of them were crying, for she was a gentle inoffensive being, and many of them had known her in better days—Andy and his wife especially, for they remembered many a good skinful of potatoes and sour milk in old times at the Heron Farm. Lord Cork, who had come with the rest from the bridge, cried also. It shook his opinions and made him uncomfortable to find that, in spite of all the rules and ordering of his scheme of existence, here was a pious charitable woman dying in want and misery. It upset his very foundations.

'Mrs. Talbot, ma'am !' said Peggy Feelan, 'you know Fader Paul bid you to forgive Tighe O'Malley, and leave him an' de likes of dem to God.'

'I forgive him,' she said.

Then at a sign from the nurse, the voices all recommenced the *De Profundis*, Mrs. Ahearne joining. The nurse supported the dying woman's head yet awhile, but Helen Talbot heard not a word of their prayers now. It was the rippling of the Barrettwater that filled her ears instead. She was far away from them all, sitting in the sunlight before her own door at the Heron Farm, waiting for her husband to drive home the cows. All the well-known fields were spread before her eyes, and her little white-haired children were playing beside her—only for a moment. They faded from her sight, and then the music of the river ceased for ever in her ears.

Peggy Feelan suddenly began to join the prayers. Mrs.

Ahearne, whose face was buried in her hands, knew what this meant. She rose to her feet, and while the nurse composed the limbs of the dead woman, she herself, with a trembling and reverent hand, closed the weary eyes.

She gave a shilling to Peggy Feelan, and, stepping quickly through the kneeling audience, passed out. She drew a deep gasping sigh when she got out, relieved and thankful to be once again in the open air and out of the sight of the awful scene within.

'Oh, Mary Mother!' she murmured in anguish, 'if ever I come to such a death as that! Oh, God forbid it, in mercy forbid it!'

She hurried on down the lane, not stopping now to pick her steps among the filth and garbage. When the corner was reached, she halted and smoothed her hair stealthily, and wiped her face, and dusted the front of her dress, although when she knelt down she had carefully turned it up. Then she slipped round the corner. There was no one in the street, to her comfort, but the same dirty children and the same animals. And when Mrs. Ahearne reached the bridge she was once more, to outward appearance, calm and collected.

She had been something over an hour away, and she went straight into Mrs. Cadogan's shop. She was a friend of hers, although she did not deal with her. Mrs. Cadogan was busy handing out the weekly purchases of tea and sugar, and taking money, or eggs, or butter, or feathers in return therefor from her country clients.

'Good morning, Mrs. Ahearne! How are you to-day, and all your family?' she said, immediately that she saw the farmer's wife at the door. 'There is your tobacco now,' she went on, speaking to a handsome constabulary man, who came in with great strides, and reached his long arm over the shoulder of the woman whose eggs she was counting. The money lay in the palm of his hand. Mrs. Cadogan took it, placed the bit of tobacco in its place, the policeman nodded, and was gone with another stride.

'Sit down, Mrs. Clifford!' said Mrs. Cadogan. 'Ah! that Tom Mahon—fine boy! That is the sort of customer

I like on a busy day. Mary, dear, come here and see to Mrs. Clifford. Six dozen of eggs, and she wants tea, and sugar, and flour, and meal, and starch. Now, Mrs. Ahearne, I am very glad to see yourself, indeed I am.'

'I thank you kindly,' replied her friend, and lowering her voice,—'one word just.' Mrs. Cadogan led the way to a back room off the shop. Lounging over the turf fire was a strongly-built young man of about twenty-seven. He was reading a paper and smoking at his ease. He rose when they came in, and at a look from his mother disappeared.

'I won't keep you, Mrs. Cadogan. You are busy, I know—but——'

Mrs. Ahearne paused, sighed deeply, untied her bonnet strings, and passed both over her cheeks upwards and across her forehead. It was an eloquent gesture, and Mrs. Cadogan understood it instantly.

'Dear me, Mrs. Ahearne! God help us! Would you be in trouble about anything?'

She sat down and turned a sympathetic kindly face towards her visitor. She was about the same age, taller, stouter, and heavier looking. Her face was of a uniform pale yellow colour, her eyes were dull, but very direct and expressive. Honesty, kindness, and patience were the leading characteristics of Widow Cadogan's homely countenance.

'Luke wrote there a while ago to America, Mrs. Cadogan?' began Mrs. Ahearne in a very low voice. 'To his cousins?'

The post-mistress answered with a nod, and there ran rapidly through her mind a host of circumstances connected with the Ahearne family at Lambert's Castle—the lease running out, the fine, the girl's marriage not coming off. 'Would Luke be running away from them?' she asked herself. 'God help them!' The expectant half-vacant look died off her face, and gave place to one of keen sympathy. She guessed the meaning of her visitor.

'The answer is about due now?' she said. Mrs. Ahearne nodded, her eyes fixed with a sharp look on those of the post-mistress.

'To-morrow morning or to-night the mail from New York is due. Will I——?'

'*Don't give him that letter*, Mary Cadogan. For God's sake in heaven, don't you give him the letter! These straps of girls, they are pulling every one they have out there after them. They are like all the rest. They hate to stop till they have all belonging to them out in it as well as themselves. They will think nothing of sending him the passage ticket; and they will do it, I know. Keep it—agrah! keep it for me.'

Mrs. Cadogan said not a word; she shut her mouth tight, and put up one hand, then rose from her chair.

'God reward you, Mary Cadogan! You've taken a great weight off my mind.'

'Sh!' was Mrs. Cadogan's acknowledgment.

'How did you know he wrote to them?' she asked presently.

'Oh! then a while ago. A talk came up one day about that Essie Rooney—weary on her! She put her comether on that poor soft child of mine, and whenever we said against such a thing, he said he'd write that minute to Judy and Kitty Ahearne, his cousins in New York, and quit all and go out there. I need not tell you that would be just destruction, for Luke could have his pick of a match in the country. So now, you know my mind.'

Mrs. Cadogan nodded, and considered for a minute. 'That letter may come at any minute now, or be here now for that matter—a mail is in. It might be here to-day, to-night, or not till to-morrow. You did not speak too soon, Mrs. Ahearne. I will send you word by some one to-morrow, either at one mass or the other, if not later, to call down to see me some day in the week; you will know then what that is for. We will just send them back the passage ticket.'

She opened the door leading from her little sitting-room into the shop. Mrs. Ahearne left without another word, and turned her steps towards Quin's shop, and the post-mistress went back to her counter.

Peggy Lehan, when she saw Mrs. Ahearne get off her car and follow the messenger down to the river-side cabins,

had been greatly tempted to step after her to see what could be taking them there. She knew, however, that Mrs. Talbot was dying, and that Peggy Feelan was in attendance, so postponed her visit till late in the day. She could not have afforded to go for Saturday was her 'best earning day.' She got pence from people, some for their soul's sake, some for value received; and then she had chances as well—bundles of hay that could be snapped, eggs that might be slyly filched, or an odd chicken from an unguarded creel. Besides, handkerchiefs were liable to be let fall, money, or pipes, or screws of snuff or tobacco to be dropped. It was a day of unbounded promise, and Peggy, like the rest, was awake and enterprising.

She was thinking that it must be time for her to go to the chapel to keep her engagement to Miss Mary Ahearne, when she spied a gossip of her own coming up—a little old woman, not one of the begging order, though her dress was not a whit better than Peggy's own.

'God save you kindly, Mrs. Kelly, ma'am! beautiful day, thank God, ma'am,' hailed Peggy, who to judge by her conversation was as interested in the weather as though she had a tillage farm.

'And you too, save you, honest woman. I am goin' up just to de post-office to see if dere is no letter from Amerikay; it is cur'ous dat my girl dere not write—yes, bedad! And were you not at Con's wake? Well, now!'

'I did not go, Mrs. Kelly, ma'am. It is so far to walk; it's not much of a wake neyther; dem people is so near, nothin' but bacon and tay. I don't think much of a wake of bacon—and dere you see Andy, de creature he's not so well able for de long walk—not but they had plenty of people and great fun entirely.'

'Oh, great!' responded Mrs. Kelly; 'and Mrs. Quin above, she was dere, and Miss Johnston from Chapel House; dere was sherry wine for dem; Miss Honor she did not go. But Mrs. Quin, out of a regard to Con's wife, dat is a relation to herself, she went. She is a very nice woman is Mrs. Quin, and I tink she is a good woman, too, for when she came out of the wake she met my son Peter, and

she spoke to him about his wife—my daughter-in-law Mary Kelly; and she spoke very nice to Peter about his wife, so she did.'

'Surely, surely,' said Peggy, 'an' why not, Mrs. Kelly? She is a very nice woman, your daughter-in-law, and she is a reader (knowing how to read), and very well come. Dese Shanahans of de Pond, dey is next ting to quite de old stock of de country-side.'

'A-a-a-h!' sighed the mother-in-law, putting her cap straight on her lint-white head. 'It is a terrible pity Peter and she has no children; a-a-a-h, indeed it is—a terrible thing, so it is! Indeed Peter is a very good man anyhow to stop wit' her at all. And, Peggy Lehan, I can tell you, it is not every one anyhow that would speak so nicely as Mrs. Quin to Peter about his wife. When she was coming out on the wake, she an' Miss Johnston of Chapel House above, she met my son Peter and she says to him, "Peter Kelly," she says, "it is a long time since I saw anybody dance so well as your wife Mary Kelly. I did not tink anybody could dance so well; she thrips it round so gracious," said she; "I was much pleased to look at her." An' now, Peggy Lehan, was it not good of Mrs. Quin to say dat to Peter about his wife?'

'Indeed, yes, Mrs. Kelly, ma'am—yes, indeed; but you know yourself it was always giv' up to Mary Shanahan to be an elegant dancer an' reader—oh, elegant!'

'A-a-a-h, yes,' sighed Mrs. Kelly senior, still discontented; 'but you see she has no children. I wonder when Mary Cadogan will begin to give out de letters.' She changed her tone of voice along with her subject, looking once more towards the post-office, a little low-sized shop lying in the hollow of the main street. There was a considerable group hanging about the door. Half a dozen country-women, whose habitual 'stand' was at the post-office, had got out of their donkey carts and were sorting their goods for the day; the hoods of the blue cloaks were thrown back, and the clean, fresh-starched white caps shone in the sunlight as they moved to and fro. A couple of constabulary lounged against the wall or exchanged items of news

with the market-people. One of the blue-cloaked ones took a basket covered with a snowy cloth out of her cart, hooked her arm through the handle, and swung it well up on her hip; then she put one foot on the threshold of the post-office door, called out some question, the reply to which might be inferred from the shake of her cap with which she received it; then she withdrew from the doorway and took herself off up the main street.

'Dat's Hannah Fagan,' observed Mrs. Kelly. 'She's off now wid her butter to Fader Paul's. She can't make enuff butter. Mrs. Shanly too—she think no butter fit to eat but what Mrs. Fagan bring her. She is a very clean woman and very particular—Hannah Fagan.'

'Tis all nonsense, just!' said Peggy Lehan, pulling out a great black old rosary; 'all luck, so it is, wit' de butter. I don't give in to such notions. Dat Hannah Fagan is a mane crature; wouldn't give you as much as de potato water. Ah! when we comes to talk of de next world, Mrs. Kelly, it is not butter will do you any good dere! No! Dere now, she is begun to give out de letters; see, dere is some comin' out wit' dem in dere hands.'

'God bless you, Peggy!' said Mrs. Kelly. 'I will go and see if dere is one for me—an', Peggy, would you be after waiting just here for me if I get one, to read it for me? My eyes, you know, are very bad with me lately.'

'Lard! yes, ma'am,' replied Peggy instantly, to whom the excuse of bad eyes was a familiar one; 'delighted to oblige!'

Mrs. Kelly moved off rapidly, and in a few minutes the watchful Peggy saw her reappear with an excited face at the door. She came back running as fast as she could through the mob, and calling aloud, 'Peggy! Peggy Lehan!'

'Peggy Lehan!' echoed half a dozen friendly voices. 'Peggy, here is Mrs. Kelly got a letter from America. Oh, Peggy Lehan! read the letter she has got from America.'

Peggy started forward at once, and with an air of immense importance took the letter—a dirty envelope with the familiar effigy of Abe Lincoln put on sideways in one corner. It was already half opened, so it did not take long

for her to extract the contents—about a page and a half of scrawl. Frowning portentously, and turning her back to the sun, Peggy muttered at it, the owner of the letter standing at her elbow sobbing noiselessly, and watching her face and the letter alternately, pressed close up to Peggy, who read out the address without a falter. She knew it by heart already—so far as that went she did those of the entire Barrettstown contingent in the United States—‘Post-office, Bramsville, Tennessee County, Massachusetts.’

‘Ay, ay,’ responded the bystanders encouragingly. Every one on the bridge had gathered about her, Lord Cork, with his mouth gaping open, topping all the heads.

‘My dear mother, this is all to tell you——’ here the reader came to a dead stop and paused blankly. She was cudgelling her memory to remember what the expected news was likely to be. Two facts were present in her mind, one that Mrs. Kelly’s daughter had been some time married, the other that when last heard from she was not in good health. This helped but little. Totally non-plussed, she stared with all her eyes at the writing. The owner of the letter looked almost distraught. ‘Ah! Peggy, tell her! tell her!’ entreated one bystander. ‘Go on!’ ordered another imperiously. ‘Borry a spectacles, woman dear,’ sneered a third. ‘Begob!’ said Peggy, stung to desperation, and seeing her reputation as a reader trembling in the balance, ‘she’s ded!’

Mary Kelly threw up her arms with a wail of despair that rang from one bridge to the other.

‘Give me the letter!’ she cried, snatching it back from the reader. ‘Oh God! my little girl is dead out in Amerikay. Oh, what will I do? Where is Tom? Where is her fader?’ She turned right round and almost at a run started off up the main street supported by Peggy, who looked much more puzzled than grieved. She ran first of all into the post-office, and addressing Mary Cadogan cried, ‘Oh, Mary! dat was a black letter you gave me dis day. My little girl is dead in Amerikay, an’ she not all out a year married. Oh! vo! vo! what will become of me and her fader!’

'I am sorry for your trouble, Mary Kelly, very sorry I am,' said the postmistress, coming forward from her desk. 'Jim,' she called, 'bring Mrs. Kelly a glass of whisky here.'

The glass of whisky despatched, the bereft mother set off once more up the street to tell Clifford the baker and a few others of her friends what had happened to her, wailing and crying and clapping her hands together, receiving in each instance lavish sympathy and its invariable concomitant—a glass of raw spirits.

'I knew something was to happen to her,' moaned Mary Kelly, 'that she was never to see de country-side of Cork no more, for don' you remember de day she went away, she went into all de back haggards down dere by de ribber, and looked at dem, an' don' you see, Mrs. Lehan, dat girl she knew den she would see dem no more. Oh, vo! vo! Oh, vo!'

At this point she had reached Quin's shop, and dashed into it headlong, her cap hanging by one string down her back, and her white curls all flying round her face,—'Oh, Mrs. Quin, ma'am! God save you, Mrs. Quin. Oh, Mrs. Quin, my little girl is dead in Amerikay—is dead!'

'Oh dear! oh dear! I am sorry for your trouble, I am indeed,' said Mrs. Quin, advancing from behind her counter, across which she was talking to Mrs. Ahearne. 'And when did you get this bad news, Mrs. Kelly?'

'Oh! de letter, de black letter it is to me; sure it came den just now, and Peggy Lehan she read it to me below on the bridge. Oh, my little girl, my girl!'

'Give me the letter!' said Mrs. Quin sharply. She had observed Peggy Lehan slip out of the shop cautiously on hearing her own name mentioned. Mrs. Kelly was a customer of Mrs. Quin's, and in her opinion should have brought her the letter to read first. She stretched out her hand authoritatively for it; one of the procession handed up the crumpled rag at once. Her practised eye ran through it in a minute.

'Lord, woman!' she cried, 'it is laughing you ought to be! Pho! why, it is a grandmother you are. It is your son-in-law that writes to you. You are a grandmother,

Mary Kelly. Dead! wisha! your daughter has a fine young son.'

'Bad luck to the reader!' roared Mary Kelly, as soon as she could find her breath after the shock of surprise caused her by this new version of the letter from America. 'When I catch dat Peggy Lehan sore bones I will give her.'

There was a general explosion of laughter from all present, in which Mrs. Kelly herself finally joined as she withdrew with her escort.

'Peggy Lehan can't read a word,' said Mrs. Quin, 'and it is not the first time she spread bad news, pretending to read their letters for people. She can't read the newspaper, not to talk of writing. It is like her impudence to take on to read.'

'The poor woman!' observed Mrs. Ahearne, who was sitting at the counter. 'She had no harm in it, at all.'

'Oh, no harm, yet how well she could invent her story, and that not a good one! She is a sly old customer. Now, I have entered you half a pound of tea at four shillings, a bottle of annotta, and there is a hundred of pollard, and a half dozen squares of blacking, and a quarter stone crown yellow soap. You got a set of knitting needles and a spool of black, and two of white. And no more—eh, Mrs. Ahearne?'

'That's all for to-day. The sugar—you entered it—is gone out to the cart.'

'Nothing for Mary to-day?'

'No,' replied Mrs. Ahearne with a sigh.

'Dear me,' observed the mistress of the shop. 'I thought by this we would be over and done with a wedding nearly, Mrs. Ahearne?'

'Ah!' sighed Mrs. Ahearne, 'I don't know what is come to that girl of mine. She has made up her mind against the match, and a nicer or finer young man than Henry Capel—why, her father and I were quite proud—he that is her equals in every way, and has a college education and all. Ah! we'll not speak of it, Mrs. Quin, at all. Mary is above stairs with Honor, is she? I must be going.'

'I will send for her. Oh, Peter!'—she was addressing

her husband—'you are there. Bid some one call down Miss Ahearne. She is with Miss Quin.'

'Go up and call down Miss Ahearne,' he in his turn ordered some one else. 'She is above with Miss Quin. How do you do, Mrs. Ahearne? Glad to see you, ma'am.'

Peter Quin advanced out of the shadow of the back shop to greet his customer and friend Mrs. Ahearne. He was a little man; his apple-red face, wrinkled beyond all description, with round cunning gray eyes and a manner which the townspeople described as 'blarneying,' and which was in truth complimentary and deferentially cheerful to a degree that suggested unwholesomeness. After all, no one had anything against him. He lent money—there were no pawnshops in Barretstown—and if he charged more interest than any member of the profession whose symbol is the three gold balls, that was the borrower's look-out. He gave long credit also, recouping himself by fabulously high charges. The doctor's wife, who came from Dublin, called Quin's tariff robbery, pure and simple. She took out her husband's bill for medical attendance 'in kind,' which possibly accounted for the high prices. His highest profits were made, however, in the licensed department; liberal watering of whisky and a corresponding closefistedness in measure yielded a profit of something like seventy-five per cent clear on the outlay. From one end of the year to the other he wore the same ill-fitting old gray homespun, changing it on Sunday for a black frock coat and a chimney-pot hat of a shape worn forty years ago.

'Well, now, to be sure, and how is "himself" and Luke?'

'Well, thank God! He had a touch of his rheumatics then, but my son is well. I can't complain then; but I'm feared for that cow of mine I was telling Mrs. Quin about—the kindest poor beast I have, too. I will leave word with the vet to come up and see to her.'

'And Miss Mary—now?' said Peter, half closing his eyes. 'Is she going to be said or no?'

'Deed, then; Mary—I don't know what megrim she has taken in her head. Weary on me, Peter Quin, the girls are very different to what they were when you and I

were young. It's all this education. Mary there—the most I can get her to do is to look on while the girl feeds the animals. I used to be up at six every morning, and for feeding a calf, or cramming a turkey, or salting down a pig, though I say it, no one could beat me. But, faith, the girls nowadays—it is books and fancy-stitching and piano-playing, and turn up their nose at their own equals.' Peter half closed his eyes reflectively on hearing this final count in the indictment.

'Right you are, indeed, Mrs. Ahearne,' chimed in Mrs. Quin; 'it is ridiculous—so it is. And there is our Miss Quin. From the time she comes in from mass in the morning till she go to bed at night, dat girl could not make you a cup of tea. No,' she added, looking round her with an expression of intense pride, 'Miss Quin don't know how to make a cup of tea for herself nor any one else.'

'She needn't, indeed,' remarked Mrs. Ahearne. 'Oh, wisha indeed! Miss Quin is one odd—so she is—need never wet her finger so long as she is alive.'

She said this, as was evident, to flatter the Quins' weak point. Mrs. Ahearne disliked Honor, and in her heart she had some instinctive fear and distrust of the little spider-like old man, whose oily suavity always oppressed and constrained her.

'You were down with Mrs. Talbot this morning?' said Mrs. Quin.

'I was there,' said Mrs. Ahearne. 'She died a beautiful death,' she added, after a pause, and guarding her face and voice.

'Poor woman, poor creature,' drawled Peter Quin from his desk. 'I was very sorry for her. You remember her in a very different state in life, ma'am.'

'Oh, well,' said Mrs. Ahearne, 'dere is ups and downs before us all.'

The mock sympathy of his voice had not imposed upon her, and she knew also that Peter Quin, in his capacity of agent, had refused to allow Helen Talbot to share a cabin with a respectable poor sempstress in the lane. This was a most gratuitous act of tyranny on Quin's part, but

luckily his sphere of free action was limited. He was too dependent as yet on public opinion to give free play to his inclinations. Peter Quin was rich and powerful, and he had been buying up leases of late, and getting property into his hands, still he was not rich enough yet to do as he chose.

Mrs. Ahearne had been waiting a little time now. She wanted to see Father Paul, and he was to return from a sick call about this time. She was nervous, for the scene she had witnessed in the morning had rather shaken her, and her business with him was important.

'Is Father Paul back, do you think, yet?' she asked.

'He is at home,' replied the shopboy.

'I saw him go by there a while ago,' said Mrs. Quin. 'By the same token take down that Limerick ham and send it up to Chapel House, Miss Johnston want's it. And where is Maulever's parcel? Here is Kitty Macan for those candles—in a minute to you, ma'am.'

Business, which had been interrupted for one moment, resumed its flood, Mrs. Quin courteously attentive to each newcomer, and Peter watching every movement, listening to all the talk, making entries, little and great, in his account-books, charging the highest penny for everything—entering even the brown paper and string, and his own and his worthy wife's civility.

Mrs. Ahearne left and turned her steps towards Chapel House. She mounted her side car again, and drove up to the Presbytery, which lay white and naked-looking in the full glare of the almost summer sun.

'Good morning to you, Mrs. Ahearne; how do you do, ma'am?' Miss Johnston greeted her as she opened the door.

'How are you, Miss Johnston? Is Father Paul inside?'

'He's inside, yes, ma'am. Will I send him round to the church, or will you just come inside?'

'Oh, thank you, I'll just see him as it is. It's not for confession.'

The door was opened, and she entered the dining-room to find Father Paul at his desk.

'Mrs. Ahearne, well now!' his reverence exclaimed in

his hearty voice, taking his spectacles off his nose. 'How is every bit of you? Grand weather it is! How are all the potatoes coming on?'

'Yes, sir, we have, thank God, finished the Jumpers field, five acres, these ten days ago. We're at the turnips now, then, a-a-a-h!' She drew a deep heavy sigh and straightened her bonnet.

'A-a-a-h!' sighed Father Paul sympathetically. Then as he had a considerable number of letters to write before post-time, and had the afternoon confessions to face as well, he turned half round in his elbow-chair, crossed his legs, and disposed himself to listen.

'I'm sorry to trouble you, Father Paul, sir, with all you have to do, but I am really put about with that girl of ours—so we are, and—and—thinking just that you took an interest in her, your reverence—I——' A pause.

'Well, Mrs. Ahearne, well! you know I do. Out with it now, woman.'

'Faith, then, your reverence, to make a long story short, 'tis neither less nor more than this same. Nothing will serve Mary but go into the convent, and there is Harry Capel, and he with a place and all, and a real good way of living. They've not much to talk of in the way of family. Capels are none of the old stock of *this* country at all, your reverence, but sure, if you have a good way of living and are an industrious young man, the rest is nothing but talk.'

'That's true,' observed Father Paul solemnly and profoundly. 'That is really true.'

'And Mary she is just twenty, coming on for twenty, and her father he can give her four hundred, and a trifle maybe in the way of stock. Four hundred is not to be sneezed at; indeed, how bad it is! Not but that Capels are well and *over* contented; and I can add a few little things myself.'

'Plenty, plenty,—and a fine, good, religiously-reared girl!'

'Oh, the best, the best indeed! But I will confess to you I'm greatly deceived in her wanting to be a nun. We do blame ourselves, indeed, for keeping her so long at the

convent school; but then, you see, a farm is a coarse place for a little girl to be brought up in. A boy is different; but until we had a way for her or to get her settled, her father and myself would rather the nuns keep her and Margaret. Then, you see, too, I don't know how, but it came to her ears that Harry Capel was scampish. 'Deed, I think it was his mother saying she was so anxious to get him settled—he would be quite good and steady, she told me, if he was once married. And then, you see, not a thing will she do but read those good books the nuns gave her, and no, she she will *not* take Harry Capel—she won't.' Mrs. Ahearne was crying.

'There is no one else, eh? Girls are so queer,' suggested Father Paul. 'She doesn't like any one else better?'

'Father Paul!' she burst out indignantly. 'Oh, Lord, sir! what is it you say to me? My girl never spoke to a boy in her life—never! Oh, sir!'

'Well, well, well! Be easy! How old is Margaret now?'

'She is eighteen—just coming on for eighteen.'

'Eighteen, well—that's all right so. And Luke has made it up with a girl from Waterford town, has he? Twelve or fourteen hundred pounds, eh?'

Mrs. Ahearne leapt from her chair with astonishment.

'Be easy, easy! Her priest wrote it to me privately. Pho! woman, how did you suppose I would not know that? Well, well, with money that is in business, you never know whether it is in it, or whether it is not in it. That's my experience. And why did not Luke cast his eye on Honor Quin here below? I don't care a bit for these girls out of large towns. If they have fine fortunes, or by way of, they demand to be treated accordingly, and they are so used to finery and grandeur.'

'Honor Quin, is it, Father Paul? God love you, sir! They think it is nothing short of a judge on the bench that will be good enough for Miss Quin. Take care she don't stop there long enough with her big purse. She wants it all and more—trifling-looking girl that she is. But I don't want to put a word in her way. Oh, not for the world!'

Father Paul was staring out of the window at the high-road, lost in thought. After a pause he spoke very slowly and gravely :

'I don't hold with interfering with the girl anyhow—you mind me now, Mrs. Ahearne. I have a great regard for your husband and yourself, but I don't like to marry one of my little girls against her own taste to a man she not only does not like but does not respect. And I christened Mary, and I take an interest in her, and, talking of that, too—if, mind I say *if*, Harry Capel is scampish—I don't know, but if it's a wife he is to get to settle him, you remember Delahunty there below—he had a farm and those Rices gave him one of their girls—I married them myself; just two years after and I buried her; and so I just say it to you now, I do not like to settle Harry Capel with your Mary.'

'And would you be then for her to go in the convent, your reverence?' asked Mrs. Ahearne, beginning to cry again.

'Sure, where's the harm of her trying? Let her take six months and see how she likes it. Harry Capel is a fine young fellow and has a good way of living. Fetch home that strap Margaret. She's long enough in the school. She'll do for Harry Capel if I know her—and give that child her own way. You ought to be glad to have her to pray for you.'

A great cloud faded away from Mrs. Ahearne's face. The perplexity and vexation all vanished at once. She looked with gratitude at Father Paul for a second, then a thought occurred to her.

'Margaret has but three hundred. You see, she is the second, and she is that sort of well-grown fine person that is easier to get off than her sister, now.'

'Ugh! there, settle that among ye. Talk to the reverend mother at Saint Cecilia's. Do you and Ahearne contrive it among ye—or send him here to me if you like.'

'I am really thankful to your reverence. I'll send the car for Margaret on Monday. They have all the dung drawn, and I can have the horse. I will just leave you a trifle, sir, for our intention at mass to-morrow.'

Father Paul slipped without a word the gold sovereign which she took from her little reticule into a drawer of his writing-table, and ended as he had begun the business conversation with a profound sigh.

'This is a queer world, so it is! That hussar corporal that was so set on marrying Kitty Mulcahy—you heard all about it, of course—yes! well, I would not give leave for her to marry him until I should write to England to find out all about him. Ha! faith, I don't like my little girls to marry soldiers at all. After writing to York, and Aldershot, and Sheffield, and last of all to Preston—a month and more it took me—I find my bold hussar has a wife and five children in Preston, not one less, and every one of them with a black muzzle on it like himself, for I sent his photograph over to make sure. Ha! ha! ha!'

'Faith, Father Paul, it is yourself,' observed Mrs. Ahearne, after joining in his laughter with all her heart. 'I will not delay you, sir, longer.'

'You will not stir now until you have some refreshment. Oh, not a foot! Mary Johnston, there!' called Father Paul.

Miss Johnston walked in at once with a tray containing decanters of port and sherry, and a plate of biscuits, which from long exposure to the air were in a very crumbling condition. In spite of her expostulations Mrs. Ahearne was forced to drink a glass of 'sherry wine.' It caused a shiver to pass down her spine, and the soft mouldy biscuit was difficult to swallow. However, both were a tribute to her position and importance which she could not fail to acknowledge with a sense of satisfaction; and it was with a feeling of genuine relief and almost happiness that she quitted the Chapel House and drove off to the railway station for her Dublin and Limerick parcels.

CHAPTER XX

'Question your desires ; know of your youth, examine well
Your blood, whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the living of a nun,
For aye to be in shady cloister mewed.'

MARY AHEARNE felt instinctively as she approached the Chapel House in company with Honor Quin that she had carried her point, and that the dreaded marriage was a thing of the past. Her pale face lighted up into something almost like cheerfulness, as she let the swing-door of the church close behind her, shutting out the garish sunlight and the noise of the carts along the stony road. She went straight up to the foot of the altar, where in all the gorgeous refulgence of the stained glass windows the tiny live spark of the sanctuary lamp seemed reduced to the merest pin-head of light. She knelt at the communion rail, and prayed with the fervour of one who has but a plank between him and drowning. After a few minutes she rose and approached the confessional in which Father Paul was now engaged. Peggy Lehan was at her post, waiting for her, saying her rosary on her greasy ancient beads—the figure on its brass crucifix was almost obliterated by hard usage.

Honor Quin was making her confession, having taken a vacant turn while Mary was praying. Peggy Lehan took her twopence, and walked off making reverences innumerable as she went to the pictures of the Stations of the Cross and the images as she passed them, and crossing herself lavishly with her well-worn crucifix.

Mary knelt down to wait for Honor, who with character-

istic selfishness had taken her turn, and clasped her fingers tightly. 'She might have waited,' she thought to herself with some bitterness, 'when she knew I was so anxious.' Then she rebuked herself for an impatient thought and tried to say a prayer, but the effort to command herself was beyond her power. Honor Quin, who had indeed been moved by her desire to get home again as fast as possible, so strongly as to exclude all thought of anybody else, received but short shrift from Father Paul, and Mary was speedily kneeling on the little hard board at his elbow.

Both murmured the prescribed preamble as fast as possible. Before she had finished, kind-hearted Father Paul, who knew and felt for her disquietude, began :

'Well, now, I have seen your mother, child, and all is settled as you wish. She will oppose you no longer, and it only remains now to settle with the nuns.'

'That is very little, sir, very little ; God bless you, sir !' She half sobbed the words.

'Ah ! well now, so—it is good that things are decided. Your mother takes a sensible view of the matter. After all, matrimony or the convent is the natural state of woman—it must be one or the other, and a mistake on either side is equally fatal—oh yes ! weary on ye for women ! My life is tormented—one never knows what to do with ye—married women and nuns and girls, ye are all on the unfortunate priest's back. Oh, Lord ! this world was a very good place until you put women in it. They spoil it entirely. Now, child, here are more people coming in. Finish your confession—hurry ! hurry ! for any sake, hurry !'

The confession did not take long. Every vein in Mary Ahearne's body was throbbing with the sense of relief and joy. When it was done, he said, speaking in quite a different tone :

'Mary, child ! this is your last confession to me. You will be with the convent chaplain henceforward. Well, child ! it is a solemn and serious undertaking. May God bless you in it, and direct you always !'

She could not answer him for sobbing, so he bade her go and pray, and to remember him—a sinner—in her prayers.

Her companion had long gone home when Mary Ahearne left the chapel, nor did she follow her to her house or make any delay or stay upon the road home. Her mother was in the yard when Mary arrived. Luke and the servant-boy were taking the horse out of the shafts. Biddy was carrying the parcels into the kitchen. It was five o'clock, and the denizens of the yard had had their supper; the hens were gravely filing off to their abiding-places, the geese were all crouched in a corner which the slanting rays of the sun still reached, and the ducks were taking a final splash in the pool by the manure-heap. The yard dog advanced fawning to meet her as she stepped through the wicket-door of the stable entrance. Her mother was saying something to Luke, who was laughing. Mary could see that she was in good-humour, as she passed without a word into the kitchen, which had all been fresh scrubbed and smelled strongly of brown soap. A huge jug of fresh-gathered cow-slips stood in the window. The supper was getting ready; a potato-pot was bubbling on the fire, and a dish of eggs was in readiness on the dresser, where a couple of great newly-baked loaves stood on the end.

Mary went straight up to her own room. There were only two bedrooms in the house—one, that of the old people, looking out in front over the yard; hers, a little narrow apartment, looked into the garden of the old castle. There was besides a sort of attic, reached by a ladder, in which Biddy, close to the eye and ear of her mistress, was installed. Luke and the servant-man shared a loft over the stables.

It was a naked queer kind of bedroom, and though it was eminently untidy, had a bleak uninhabited look, as if no one lived in it. The bed, a big plain wooden one, had not been made yet for the day, nor had the window been opened. Judy rebelled ever since Mary's return from school at the extra work of attending to her room, and never made the bed save under compulsion. A little square looking-glass had turned a somersault in its frame, the screws being loose, and presented its wooden back to the room. Mary never used it—looking-glasses were sinful, and causes of sin. A tattered old newspaper took the place

of a toilet-cover on the table. Two broken chairs and a table with a basin and a tin water-can completed the furniture of the room. There was no press, no drawers. Some nails behind the door held her scanty wardrobe. Her black wooden box was at the foot of the bed.

It was plainly to be seen that its owner was no real inhabitant of the place, merely a bird of passage.

On the chimney-piece was a statue of the Madonna, with candlesticks and vases at either side. Beyond this there was not an attempt even of the humblest kind at decoration, not a flower, though the garden held a spring crop of blossoms. And it was not that Mary Ahearne did not love flowers: it was her secret wish on entering the convent to be given the charge of the greenhouse, where the nuns grew the flowers for the altar. But she did not attempt to grow flowers, or to decorate the farmhouse in any way. This was because she shared the same feeling of unrest and insecurity that hindered her father from imitating the Scotch farmer's pretty garden and tidy approach. Old Ahearne never drove past M'Neil's farm without stopping to admire the roses and the creepers trained on the house front, and the pretty bright flower-beds in the grass before it, yet he never dared to imitate M'Neil's example. Some one would be attracted by it, and bid over his head for the lease of the farm, as had been the case with the Scotchman. In the convent Mary had obtained a prize for neatness and order, but very little of either was visible in her room.

Little wonder, taking into account the manner of her bringing up; but the feeling for better things was in her nature, though deprived of an outlet, save in the religious life which she had chosen. As with her so it was with others, boys as well as girls: the æsthetic sentiment was stifled, almost destroyed, by the vicious system under which they lived. Who knows but that, as in some places rivers run underground and hide themselves, to emerge later in broad glistening floods, the graces and decencies of life, now penal and only kept alive by stealth, as it were, behind the walls and in the seclusion of the cloisters, may re-

appear and flourish, as did other goodly things in bygone days.

There was a little pile of religious books in one corner. She placed her prayer-book on the top of these, took the little case containing her rosary out of her pocket and put it there too. Then she took off her hat and jacket and laid them away in her trunk. Then she smoothed her thick hair without going near the little mirror, and was just turning to leave the room when she met her mother coming in at the door. She looked very pale and tired, and seemed to move very heavily.

'I was just coming down to see to the milking,' the girl began hurriedly.

'Never mind it,' said her mother, for a wonder not crossly, nor this time looking away from her. 'You need not do it any more now. I saw Father Paul and'—she stopped for a second—'I give in to what he says.'

There was silence now for a minute or two, and Mary Ahearne breathed a mute prayer of gratitude. Mrs. Ahearne stood resting one hand on the footboard of the bed. She looked at Mary with an expression, partly sorrowful, partly angry, and a little contemptuous. Then she resumed:

'So, on Monday week, I'll have Margaret home here, and if you like to go so soon, I'll leave you at the convent in her place. Of course your father will have to settle about the money with them, or Father Paul will do it, maybe. You have your own way, anyhow. Mary,' she continued, 'you can't say we have not indulged you. It is very few parents would disappoint themselves for you as we have done. I counted this long time on seeing you well settled at Capel's, and it is so near me and all.'

'St. Cecilia's is not so far, mother. It is full as near as Capel's.'

'Ah! it is not that way I mean; but if you would be sick or wanting anything I could come at you. 'Tis terrible to say I should go to a house, and my own child lie sick there, and I not be able to see her.'

'What would make me be sick; and sure, if you could come to me or not, it would not be different.'

'Ah! there it is.—It is all as one to you. Those nuns have changed your nature to me, and if I was lying and like to die, and you to be just to say at one hour's drive from me, you would not come to me either. Wishah! wishah! What it is to rear children!' And once more the poor overwrought woman began to cry bitterly.

'I could pray for you, mother. Could I be doing better than to pray for you?'

A sound from below startled them at that instant. 'There!' cried Mrs. Ahearne, wiping her eyes. 'It is your father's step. Mary, come down. The supper was ready when I came up.'

CHAPTER XXI

‘There is nothing makes a man suspect much, more than to know little. And therefore men should remedy suspicion by procuring to know more, and not to keep their suspicions in smother !’

EVER since the morning on which she had heard of Chichele’s invitation to Father Conroy’s dinner, Mrs. Courthope had been disquiet and anxious on his behalf. She knew him too well to ask leading questions if she were not ordinarily too civil to resort to that domestic rack. She wanted to talk to Tighe O’Malley, but did not like to make that overture, feeling that she had nothing more definite than her own nervous suspicions to communicate. It was no use worrying Lady Blanche. She could never be got to see anything ; she had no sympathy, no imagination. All the MacAnalleys were alike deficient in that direction. They were just a little wanting in those qualities of which she was conscious of possessing rather a redundancy ; and as for her husband, she knew better than to try and enlist him on her side. The more she thought over these matters the less she liked the aspect of affairs. She retired one morning to her room, and seating herself at a writing-table which was placed in a window, began to review her own suspicion and her grounds for them. He had met that girl : of that she was certain—in fact she knew it—but of how the introduction had been effected, or who was responsible for it, she was absolutely ignorant. She had never heard a word of the story of the rescue, and it was impossible that she should. Miss Mauleverer had forbidden Mary Ahearne to

speak of it, dreading lest her Aunt Juliet might be informed of her heedless prank, and be needlessly alarmed, or forbid her going out alone. Father Conroy had kept silent for the same reason ; and, besides, he was not in possession of the details—Chichele, in any case, would have been the last to talk—and so the chief actors having tacitly agreed to forget the incident, it could scarcely come to the ears of one isolated as Mrs. Courthope was.

‘If I had not seen that girl,’ she mused, ‘I should have been consumed with anxiety as to what she could be like. Now, having seen her, my curiosity as to her personal appearance being fully satisfied, I am rather the worse off.’

Then she recalled the looks of the girl, and confessed unwillingly, and with a growing anger and irritation, to her beauty. How in the world could he have come to know them?—for she was compelled to acknowledge that it was impossible that he could have made acquaintance with them as one might with a milkmaid or a farm-servant on the country roads. It must have been the old aunt—some scheming, intriguing ancient, no doubt. But that again was impossible—utterly. She was bedridden, or nearly so, according to Mrs. Marchmont. It could only have been the priest. He had attempted other things in their behalf ; she recollected what Tighe had told them. No doubt about it now—it was a Jesuitical plot. She repeated the words to herself with exultation as if they contained everything. They knew Chichele was an only son, the heir to an estate, and in all human probability to a title also ; for his uncle, Lord Ansdale, was now close on seventy, and in all likelihood would never marry. That priest knew all this, and was laying schemes to trap the silly boy.

She felt relieved in a measure when she had excogitated this, according to herself, lucid explanation of affairs. The obvious course was to get Chichele away. It was perfectly plain to her from his preoccupied manner and divers other signs, most significant when read by the light of her experience, that he was in mischief, in love—entangled, if you will.

She shuddered at the thought. His character was so well known to her, his strong will and persistency—all the

Ansdales had that—constancy was the family foible—his romanticism—he detested commonplace women. He must be got away—she summed up everything in that.

‘Creswell!’ she said suddenly to her own maid, who was sitting in the window sewing lace on a dress. ‘Creswell, how is your headache? Better? Oh, that is good! Do the telegrams go from the railway station or from the post-office in the village?’

‘Both, m’m,’ replied the abigail; ‘but I know Mr. O’Malley and Lady Blanche send any message they are particular about to the railway. I’m told letters ain’t safe in these country post-offices. They opens ’em when they have nothing else to do.’

‘Oh!’ cried Mrs. Courthope, thinking of what Tighe had told her on the day she arrived.

‘I can’t say it for certain of this one, but I know at Ranforth the postmistress put a kettle on to boil regular when the mails was coming in, and she read the London papers, too—used to take ’em out of their covers and slip them back again. It got found out, though; she wasn’t careful, and she put the wrong papers in. They made complaints, and of course it all came out.’

‘Creswell, I wish you to go over to the railway, and send a telegram for me. Be very particular. You could drive over with the boy, who goes at twelve. Do you think you could get him to take you? It would do your head good.’

‘Oh, yes, m’m, I think so!’

‘Well, inquire, and let me know. You may go now, Creswell, for I must speak to Lady Blanche and try to go myself if you cannot get over with the tax-cart.’

The maid left the room, and Mrs. Courthope wrote a long letter to the family lawyer in London. He was thoroughly to be trusted, and it fortunately happened that there was some legal business of considerable importance in which her brother was concerned going on at the moment. It could be risked, she thought, as she took a telegraph form out of the despatch-box on her writing-table. She had no time to lose; it was twenty minutes past eleven.

'Ida Courthope, Barretstown, Co. Cork, to Pursewell Sheriff, Furnival Inn, London.'

That part of it was quickly done. The rest was the crux. It must be strongly worded, or it would be useless. After some deliberation she wrote the following message: 'Confidential and urgent. Please recall my brother Chichele to London. Allege business. He is in danger here. Letter will explain.'

'I don't believe I could have done it better,' she said; 'and just twenty words.' She read and counted it, feeling quite pleased. 'And now for the letter. He will think the Fenians are threatening Chichele,' she said meditatively.

The letter was a great deal longer, though by no means more explicit than the telegram. As she went on, Mrs. Courthope grew more cautious. She named nobody, and contented herself with throwing out a number of mysterious hints.

The family lawyer, Pursewell Sheriff, got this 'explanation by letter' and the telegram simultaneously next morning. He had been out of town when the first arrived. He obeyed the telegram at once, first carefully locking up the despatch received from Mrs. Courthope. One page out of the four convinced him of the nature of the communication; and bestowing a heartfelt malediction upon the sex in general, and Mrs. Courthope in particular, he flung it into the same receptacle as her telegram, to bear the latter company, and be in readiness if they ever should be required.

Creswell returned with her bonnet on, announcing that the boy had consented to take her. She took the telegram from her mistress, listening attentively to all the injunctions as to care and secrecy with which the charge was accompanied, and departed.

The tax-cart drove off by the back road. Mrs. Courthope watched its progress through the trees with some slight feeling of uneasiness now that she had accomplished her task.

'It will be all right, I hope,' she said to herself. 'We are all going to spend the afternoon at Maxwellton Lodge, I believe. He will be safely disposed of for to-day, and to-morrow, if Mr. Sheriff is prompt, will see him by this

on the road to London. I don't believe I could undergo this state of affairs for another week.'

She locked her writing-case, and hastened down to the morning-room. Chichele was there talking to Lady Blanche.

'They are not in the least common people,' he was saying, 'quite the contrary; and the little girl is exquisitely beautiful—a wild unconventional sort of child, but not in any degree vulgar or coarse.'

'Of whom are you speaking, Chichele?' questioned Mrs. Courthope, with sudden anxiety.

'Those Mauleverer children,' replied Lady Blanche. 'I am sure it is so. They do great credit to that poor unfortunate old relative of theirs. I wish we could do anything, but it is so hard, and they reject all overtures that are directly made to them. Ida, you know Chichele has picked up an acquaintance with them, and is raving to me about their beauty and grace, and what not.'

The last part of Lady Blanche's speech was meant by her to be semi-ironical in sound, but there was nevertheless an undercurrent of real feeling below her words.

Mrs. Courthope's face became a little pale. She turned her back to her brother and Lady Blanche, and seemed for a moment busy with a glass full of flowers on the mantelpiece. She was on the point of bursting out with some contemptuous reminder of the fact that they were illegitimate, that their proper place in life was to be servants, that it was grotesque nonsense to speak of them in such terms as Chichele and Lady Blanche had used, as if they were people who were fit to be mentioned in society. Half a dozen bitternesses rushed to her ready tongue, but the recollection of the telegram, that happy thought of hers, checked her. It would be of very little use indeed to say anything which might irritate Chichele. The telegram was in all likelihood half way to Mr. Sheriff by this. That was a bright inspiration of hers! By this time next day—there was no night mail unfortunately—he would be on his way to London. That simply ended everything.

'Has he really?' she replied to Lady Blanche. 'Chichele,

I had no idea that you were so susceptible. These are wonderful rustics, these persons you speak of, dear.'

'They are not rustics,' said Chichele, almost angrily. 'Nothing near it!' His face wore almost a scowl, and his cheeks were red.

'Perhaps not,' returned she carelessly. 'I saw them, you know.' She moved indolently towards the table loaded with newspapers and books, which was beside Lady Blanche's chair, and took up a periodical.

'We are going to Maxwellton for the afternoon, Chichele. I know you would like to see them; Lady Fredbury asks so often for you.'

'Yes. How do we go? It is only ten miles off.'

'Let me see—there are five of us. Well, the carriage can do that at a pinch.'

'Oh, Blanche! I will ride over; you know I detest being carted. Let me have the roan, Tighe's roan, if he does not want to ride.'

'To be sure! Ring and desire them to send word to the stables.'

Mrs. Courthope was discontented at this arrangement. She had wished not to lose sight of him until the reply telegram from London should have done its work. Just then, however, lunch was announced, and she had no time to protest.

Tighe O'Malley and Mr. Courthope came in through a window and took their places.

'We are all bound for Maxwellton, are we not?' asked O'Malley.

'Are you going to ride?' asked Chichele eagerly. 'If not, can I take your roan? I rather fancy riding over.'

CHAPTER XXII

‘There is little friendship in the world, and least of all between equals, which was wont to be magnified: that that is, is between superior and inferior, whose fortunes may comprehend the one the other.’

AT about twelve o'clock one fine day, shortly after Father Paul's dinner, Juliet D'Arcy was sitting by herself in the window of the Quaker's house. Marion was at the convent, reading Italian. Gertrude had been there since ten o'clock, and was not to be home until three. Kitty Macan was busy in the lower part of the house with her *aide-de-camp*, a barefooted pagan from Barrettsdown, whom she ordered about like a dog, and treated with scorn and contempt.

Miss D'Arcy was reading a book of devotion, *The Foot of the Cross*. It was one of her good days; her head felt clearer than usual. Kitty Macan always knew when the mistress could be safely left, and had not been into the sitting-room since breakfast.

It was a beautiful spring day; the sun shone straight into the room, and lighted up the portrait of Godfrey Mauleverer on the wall opposite to where she was sitting. The scarlet uniform cloak glowed; the wild dark eyes had almost the look of life again. Juliet, whenever she saw the sunlight on that face, asked herself if she were thinking as she looked at it of his children, Marion and Godfrey, who were so like him, or only the painted memory of her dead nephew.

She read on quietly. The sun illumined her gold

spectacles, and she frowned her thick eyebrows—black yet, although her hair was white—in order to see the printed words before her. She loved the sunlight for its own sake; the warm glow called up many memories to her.

It was as still as the grave; not an echo from the wood could reach the house, and but for the endless singing of the birds, one might have thought oneself clean out of the world. The silence was broken, however, at last. A sound of footsteps made Miss D'Arcy raise her head. This was something quite unusual. They were heavy measured steps, not like those of the children, who were heard and then seen all but simultaneously. She could not see the visitors, nor could she get out of her chair, so was forced to wait patiently until the bell had made itself heard in the kitchen.

The hall door opened, voices were heard, the door shut again, and then Kitty Macan entered, and said in a loud and most formal voice:

'Miss Johnston and Mrs. Ahearne sends their duty to you, Miss D'Arcy, ma'am, and wishes to see you for a minute.'

'Certainly, Kitty. You can show them in.'

Kitty opened the door, and gave admittance to the visitors. Miss Johnston wore her Sunday dress and bonnet, and had on gloves, and Mrs. Ahearne wore her black velvet bonnet and carried a large basket. This she laid down in a corner. Miss Johnston shook hands with Miss D'Arcy, waiting for the old lady to extend her hand first. Mrs. Ahearne curtsied.

'Sit down. Kitty, chairs!' commanded Juliet.

'I hope I see you well, ma'am,' said Mrs. Ahearne, taking a chair with great diffidence.

'I had intended to send you word, Miss D'Arcy, last night by Miss Marion, only I did not get a chance to speak with her,' said Miss Johnston by way of proem, 'that Mrs. Ahearne desired to pay her respects to you, and to inform you of some matters.'

'You have always been so kind, Miss D'Arcy, madam'—Mrs. Ahearne took up the discourse at this point with a

readiness that savoured of pre-arrangement; 'and Miss Maulever was at our house the other day, and I just took the liberty to bring you a few chickens and a small roll of the new grass butter.'

'Thank you, Mrs. Ahearne,' said Miss D'Arcy sincerely enough. 'You are exceedingly kind.'

'Deed they are no good at all,' cried Mrs. Ahearne, lapsing suddenly into her own natural manner and voice. 'I wish they were better for your sake, ma'am. And just to mention, my son Luke is shortly to be married—getting a good match in the regard of money; and Margaret, she is to be settled soon too—Harry Capel of the Larkhill Farm. It was to have been Mary, but, you see, Mary she is set on the convent, and herself and Father Paul they have talked me over. It is God's will, no doubt.' Mrs. Ahearne finished her set speech with a profound sigh, and drew her handkerchief out of her pocket.

'Certainly, certainly,' said Miss Juliet. 'Miss Johnston, will you please ring the bell? Great changes, Mrs. Ahearne, great changes in your family, and all for the better, I hope sincerely!'

'God send it so, Miss D'Arcy,' replied the farmer's wife piously.

Miss D'Arcy was pleased beyond measure with the visit. It was intended as an act of respect and homage to herself, an acknowledgment, in short, of her suzerainty. She became quite bright and elated.

Kitty Macan dispensed wine and seed cake, the last extremely mouldy, owing to long preservation.

'Your son is marrying some one from the town of Waterford, I understand,' said Miss D'Arcy.

'Yes, ma'am; she is a Miss Delanty, and it is altogether a most suitable match, save in the regard of age. The young lady is a year or two older than Luke. She has two thousand pounds, and she is related to the Bishop of Waterford. She is a first cousin, twice removed, of the bishop, on his father's side. It is all very well,' continued Mrs. Ahearne, who had related this much with evident pride, 'I have not a word to say against the girl; but

town-reared girls that have never lived on a farm, they are not good for farmers, and if there is the name of a great fortune, well then again, they require to be treated with respect accordingly, as Father Conroy said. Luke is already looking out for a covered car for her, and he talks of selling the old car, or changing it for a new second-hand one.'

'Dear me! the fortune will not last long, Mrs. Ahearne. And what settlement have you come to for yourselves? Will you give him up everything?'

'Oh yes! we will give him up the farm, and, you see, the lease is nearly out. Marchmont wants a fine for renewal. Luke can renew for himself now, and his fader and I we will just keep one room and the use of the kitchen, and the grass and keep of a cow, and two ridges of all potatoes and cabbages and turnips. So long as I am there to keep an eye to things,' sighed the prospective mother-in-law, 'it don't matter so much, you see, ma'am.'

Miss D'Arcy nodded. 'I hope, Mrs. Ahearne, that you will all agree happily among yourselves. A son-in-law in the house with you, or a daughter-in-law, it is not so easy to manage. Look at those Farrells of the Greenhaws. They married their daughter to a man who had little money, and brought him home, and there, you can see it, they are in the court every quarter-sessions, suing each other for maintenance or assault, one thing or other, and all living in the same house.'

'Dispeace in a house and family is horrid,' observed Miss Johnston didactically.

Mrs. Ahearne looked at the last speaker. The expression of her face reflected her thoughts, which were, 'What does an old maid like you know about it?'

'My son Luke is a very good well-reared boy, though I say it, Miss Johnston, and could be depended upon to know his duty to his parents.'

Miss Johnston's face assumed a grin of derision on hearing this.

'You are quite right, Mrs. Ahearne,' spoke Miss D'Arcy; 'and that seems to me to be a most sensible arrangement, and you living with them will be able to look after things,

and to supplement the deficiencies of the young woman. Quite so, a most commendable arrangement !'

Miss D'Arcy leant back in her chair and folded her hands with the air and dignity of a judge.

'Ah !' sighed Mrs. Ahearne, 'tis all in God's hands, ma'am. 'Tis only those, I say, that have reared a family and have had the care and trouble—the comfort, too, not to wrong God's providence—of children, that can feel what it is when they grow up and must go out in the world.' Her eyes filled with tears, and she forgot her handkerchief and wiped them away with her apron.

Juliet D'Arcy's keen eyes softened and grew dim. Had not she also reared a family, and had the care and trouble and the comfort too, of the children? Her heart was moved part with sympathy for Mrs. Ahearne, but in her mind's eye she saw most distinctly the Mauleverers.

'The world is hard. But you are not parting with your children ; Margaret is marrying near home.'

'I don't complain, ma'am, I am thankful ; but you must feel all the same.'

'You should think of old Judy, Mrs. Ahearne,' said Miss Johnston, somewhat cynically, 'that has all her children in America. Sure, they might as well be dead, only they send her money.'

'Yes, truth !' replied Mrs. Ahearne. 'They tell me if you are troubled, look round you and you are sure to find some one worse off than yourself, and be thankful for that.'

'Take another glass of wine, Mrs. Ahearne,' said Miss D'Arcy, who was minded now to wind up and close the meeting. 'It will do you good. I am greatly pleased to hear your good news, for it is good news to hear of your respectable family being all well settled in life. They do credit to their father and mother,' she added, turning to Miss Johnston.

'Oh certainly, Miss D'Arcy !' assented the priest's house-keeper. 'Good, pious, religious family—no better. And Mary entering St. Cecilia's as choir-sister.'

The fact was that Mrs. Ahearne was in her own soul

full of delight and pride at the impending changes in her family. Luke's match was the envy of all the other mothers of marriageable sons for twenty miles round, and she knew it; and although she would have preferred the married state to the religious profession for her eldest daughter, it was an honour to the family to number a choir-nun—not a lay-sister—among its members. Margaret, who was only eighteen, was perhaps hardly 'finished' as to music and 'the branches,' but Harry Capel of Larkhill, though not steady, was a very desirable match, as to age, looks, and means. Notwithstanding all this, for luck's sake she deliberately took a desponding, low-spirited view of affairs—the slightest exhilaration on her part would have been tantamount to inviting the evil eye.

Miss D'Arcy had a pretty shrewd idea of the exact state of affairs, but she was beginning to grow weary. She was easily tired, and her attention began to flag. Miss Johnston, who knew her ways, signed to Mrs. Ahearne that she must make haste and conclude. Miss D'Arcy's delicacy was well known to that worthy woman.

She rose from her chair and fidgeted nervously with her hands.

'If I might make so bold, ma'am, seeing that Mary and Miss Maulever have been comrades at school, to ask if you would permit the young gentry to come up on Sunday night. It is Mary's last night at home, and Luke's young lady and her people are coming over from Waterford, and the Capels—it would be a great compliment to us, Miss D'Arcy, ma'am. Father Conroy is coming, and Father Collins and Miss Johnston, and we would be honoured by Miss Maulever and Mr. Godfrey.'

'I thank you, Mrs. Ahearne.' Miss D'Arcy made a great effort of will, and forced herself to listen to the end. 'I thank you for—for—your attention and respect. Father Conroy,' she added after a pause, 'will let you know.' She sank back quite exhausted in her chair, her eyes closed, and she seemed as if falling asleep.

Miss Johnston laid her hand on her companion's shoulder, and they left the room at once.

Kitty Macan was in the hall, waiting to see them, and, not missing her opportunities, she had heard every word.

Mrs. Ahearne spoke, handing Kitty her basket.

'Her ladyship—Miss D'Arcy seems poorly just now, Mrs. Macan. I hope we have not stayed too long, or distressed her.'

Kitty opened the door of the sitting-room and peered in. 'Oh no! she is all right,' she answered. 'You see, Mrs. Ahearne, she is troubled in her mind; it is a great weight upon her, upon all of us, dem children growing up now, and dey kept out of deir own—and it is through her, you know.' Kitty tapped her forehead, and nodded significantly. 'It is all God's will, but it is a sore trial. If Miss D'Arcy had not got dat stroke dat time, and forgot everything, and her head all gone, Godfrey would be in his fader's own place, over the river there where Tighe O'Malley is now; and den what great matches *our* young ladies would get.'

'Yes,' said Miss Johnston, but reprovingly. 'Kitty, don't talk of it. You know Father Paul would be very angry to hear what you have said.'

'Mrs. Macan! you is quite right; it is all true,' observed Mrs. Ahearne with humility. 'If you would just empty my basket and give it to me; there is a trifle I brought in compliment to Miss D'Arcy.'

'We are very much obliged to you, Mrs. Ahearne; 'tis most kind of you, ma'am,' said Kitty with a remarkable change of manner. She scurried away with the basket, speedily disposed of its contents, and returned it to the donor.

The two visitors left the house by the entrance gate, and took their way back towards town. About half way to the bridge they met Marion hastening home with her books from the convent. She barely stayed to say good-day to them, and hurried on.

'I wish,' began Mrs. Ahearne, who was thinking of her Sunday night's feast, 'dat—oh, well, her aunt will settle it all and Fader Paul. Sure, when they come wit' you, Miss Johnston, it is all right—an' the greatest respect we all have for them.'

'Who comes here?' ejaculated Miss Johnston suddenly.

A gentleman on horseback had appeared on their view, as they were turning with a bend of the river. It was Chichele, going to pay his visit to the Mauleverers. He had seen Marion from afar, and had at first thought of overtaking her. Then necessity, for she got over the ground like a fairy, as well as a sense that the entire population of Barrettstown would be spectators of the feat, hindered him. As the young man approached, Miss Johnston, whose sight was not very good, recognised him.

'Look at him,' she whispered to her companion. 'It is one of the gentlemen from O'Malley's.'

'Oh!' returned Mrs. Ahearne. 'He is an elegant-looking young person. Oh, beautiful!'

'He dined with us the other night there at Chapel House,' observed Miss Johnston, carelessly, 'and now he is going to pay a visit to Miss D'Arcy.'

'Oh, Lord! oh, indeed!' ejaculated her friend, awestruck, as Miss Johnston intended she should be.

Chichele had hurried past them without recognising the priest's housekeeper. He had made his escape just before lunch at Barrettstown. His people understood that they were to overtake him on the road to Maxwellton. For some not too well-defined reason, or rather feeling, he did not want to be seen by them going to the Quaker's house. There was every prospect of their walking down to the town after lunch. The carriage was to follow and pick them up, and it was hinted would overtake him on the Limerick Road, which was in the direction they were going. It was with a sense of relief that he found himself crossing the bridge over the mill-race. The side door of the entrance gate was, as usual, hospitably ajar, and he passed through it under the overhanging ivy tods, and into the shadowed sweep before the door. Towards the entry he made his way, over gravel that felt wet and cold to the foot, and was discoloured by the perpetual drip from the shrubs, under the luxuriant tangle of cherry laurel, laurustinus, and holly. The shutters of some of the top windows were closed. The plastered front of the house was all-weather-stained various

shades of green. Great tufts of lichen grew here and there on the walls, but the two granite steps, that led up to the door were scoured clean and white.

He knocked and rang. Kitty Macan appeared in response to his summons, and stared at him, wild-eyed with astonishment.

'Is Miss Mauleverer at home?' he asked.

'She is,' replied Kitty, who gave no sign of admitting him; she looked suspicious.

'Is Miss D'Arcy?' he murmured. 'Is Mr. Mauleverer?' but at that moment Godfrey appeared in person coming down stairs—for the first time that day, late as it was. His eyes were bloodshot and heavy, his thick hair tossed and wet, and he looked pale and listless. He started on catching sight of the visitor.

'Oh, Mr. Ansdale, good morning!' he said, 'I had forgotten you were coming. Come this way.'

Godfrey's manner was not very cordial. Chichele followed him nevertheless. 'My aunt is an invalid,' he said, opening the sitting-room door. 'Oh! Marion, you are here. Here is Mr. Ansdale. Aunt Juliet, this is Mr. Ansdale, who dined with us last night.'

'Our aunt, Miss D'Arcy,' Marion supplemented her brother's laconic introduction. Godfrey had thrown himself into an arm-chair by the turf fire, stretched out his legs, and covered his eyes from the sunlight with his hand.

Chichele bowed to the strange-looking figure in the window, surely the oddest-looking old woman he had ever seen in his life. She made him think of some old French picture with her wild-looking black eyes and her white hair carried in a roll off her pallid ivory-hued face, which the red walls of the room and the shadow of the curtain behind her made even less life-like.

He seated himself in a chair opposite, with his hat and stick in his hand. Juliet looked at him curiously. He reminded her vaguely of people whom she used to meet and know long years ago—her nephew Godfrey's companions. She made him feel a little nervous. Marion said nothing, and her brother seemed to hold himself apart from all the

world. He made some commonplace remark about the weather.

'The weather,' said Miss D'Arcy, 'is of little consequence to me. I never go out, yet I find myself better always when the sun shines, as it does to-day.'

'This climate is certainly a damp one. It has rained every day since I came here,' he replied.

'You ought not to complain—broken weather is good for sport, you know. The river should be in fine order now.' Godfrey seemed to wake up.

'I have not done much fishing,' he replied. 'The fish of Barrettwater are mythical.'

'It is horribly poached, I know that,' said Godfrey. 'You can get salmon any time you want it in the town, and the worst of it is they take it in the close time.'

'How is it got?' Chichele was on the point of asking, but he restrained himself. Tighe O'Malley was the lord of the manor, and these matters were his affair. Besides, he had observed that it was Tighe's habit to wink at a large number of doings which in England would have been promptly visited by the law. His mode of administering his estate was probably Irish. His tenants might be afraid of him, but Chichele and his brother-in-law, Mr Courthope, had both made up their minds that Tighe O'Malley's authority was curiously ill-defined, that he might be in one sense an autocrat, but that he was completely destitute of moral courage.

At that moment Godfrey's greyhound came into the room, and after sniffing at the visitor, laid his head in his master's hand. Chichele admired the dog, which was a thoroughbred, and very handsome.

'Come out into the garden,' said Godfrey, suddenly becoming animated. 'I'll show you a ferret I borrowed to-day. We get so many rats here from the river that we can hardly keep the poultry on account of them.'

Godfrey rose, and Chichele followed him through a dark passage past a low-ceilinged kitchen, where a fire burned on the hearthstone with a great pot swinging by a chain over it. Two or three figures appeared indistinctly

in the dim light as they passed. Crossing a small yard, paved but thickly grown over with grass, they let themselves into the garden by a door.

'Down, Fly!' ordered Godfrey, striking at the greyhound, who was leaping up and fawning on them. 'Come round this way. I have the ferret here, for fear of him getting at Marion's rabbits.'

They reached an outhouse in a corner. Godfrey unlocked the door, and opening a basket, the lid of which was carefully fastened down, displayed a cream-coloured ferret. It raised its pointed snout to Godfrey, turning its head from side to side, and watching him with its keen eyes.

'I told them to give it some bread and milk,' said Godfrey angrily, 'and of course those fools were afraid of it. I say, Mr. Ansdale, just keep your hand to the lid of the basket for a minute, will you? I will get some for it.'

He ran off, jumping over the hedges and bushes, the greyhound at his heels barking with excitement, and evidently thinking that this haste was all on his account.

Chichele held the lid down fast for a minute or two, when a quick light step and a rustle made itself heard without. He thought it was Marion, and forgetting his charge, rushed hastily out. Quick as he was, the ferret was quicker. To push its head out under the light wicker lid was but the work of a second, and Chichele reached the gravel walk to behold Gertrude with an armful of books, staring at him with astonishment, and at the same instant the lithe yellow body of Godfrey's ferret vanish like a flash among the cabbages and gooseberry bushes.

'Oh! Mr. Ansdale, you have let it go—Luke Ahearne's best ferret. Oh! let us catch it. Are you afraid to catch it? I am.' She dropped her books unceremoniously on the gravel, and ran to call Godfrey, Chichele meantime giving chase to the fugitive among the cabbages.

Gertrude cried 'Godfrey! Godfrey!' to such good effect that he and Marion and even Kitty Macan and her assist-

ant, a bare-legged shock-headed girl, obeyed the summons, and followed close on him as he ran carrying a saucer of bread and milk in his hand. On learning the truth of affairs he flung this crashing on the ground, and hailing a terrier from the yard darted after Chichele into the thicket of bushes and weeds.

'Gertrude! I shall punish you,' he cried. 'It is your doing, I know. The devil! keep Fly off, will you! You know he will kill the ferret. Towards the ditch, Ansdale.'

'Fly! Fly!' hailed Gertrude. 'Come here! I did not, Godfrey. I had nothing to do with it.' She caught Fly by the collar as she spoke, and grasped him tight. 'I know nothing of it.'

'No,' cried Chichele, whose eyes were intent on the terrier; 'I let it slip. It was an accident, Mauleverer, I assure you.'

'Keep close to the terrier,' shouted Godfrey; 'I think he's on the scent.' He ran up as fast as he could behind the dog, whose ears and tail betrayed that he was near the fugitive.

'I see her. Marion! get the basket. Quick!' cried Godfrey imperiously. 'Down! Dick! Do you want your nose torn? Back here—get in to heel. Dog, steady there! Ansdale, do you see her? Just stand over to the other side, and move up when I bid you head her off, and I'll take her by the neck. Good boy, Dick! knows better than to meddle with a ferret. Hurry, hurry, Marion!'

Marion brought the basket without much delay, and held it ready. Godfrey advanced stealthily, beckoning Chichele to close up on the ferret and attract its attention. He contrived to lift it by the neck, and secure it once more in the basket without being bitten.

'How did you come to let her go?' he asked Chichele.

'I removed my hand from the lid for a moment, and before I could stop it the beast was out and down the walk before me. It was all my fault.'

'My Lard! Oh, dear!' began Kitty Macan, picking up the bits of the broken saucer. 'Will you look at anoder of Miss D'Arcy's good saucers broke again?'

Notin' would serve you, Godfrey, but de good chaney to feed your dam rubbish wid. 'Tisn't you will be blamed for dat; 'tis we.' But this tirade fell on the empty air, so she turned furiously on her red-legged subordinate, driving her before her like a whirlwind. 'Judy Kelly! go in an' team dose pratos dis minute—starin' dere—you God-forgotten rigmarole!'

'I wonder it did not bite you, Godfrey,' said Gertrude. 'Oh, don't let it out again! I am so afraid of those things.'

'Afraid of rats and mice and spiders, and everything that is smaller than yourself!' gibed her brother. 'Go and bring me another saucer of bread and milk. No! never mind; she'll be too startled to eat it now. Here, Fly! I say, Mr. Ansdale, come and try for a hare in the ditch below. 'St, dog!'

Gertrude and he raced with the greyhound in the direction indicated, in too great a hurry to notice if their invitation were accepted or not.

Marion and Chichele had already moved off, and were taking their way leisurely among the apple-trees. The garden was wilder than ever, now that the spring had set things growing. It was not neglected, however. The sacristan, who came from Chapel House occasionally to superintend and direct Rody's operations, confined, it was true, his exertions to what was absolutely necessary. A large part had been cleared and set with potatoes; it lay all black and fragrant of newly-turned clay; and there were beds of parsley and kitchen herbs. But lily of the valley was pushing its curled green shoots out of the earth, and violets announced their presence from the shady places. Monthly roses bloomed here and there from amongst the ivy which choked the old plum-trees on the wall. Tall old wallflowers, self-sown, straggled about and scented the air, and the tops of the walls were thickly fringed with all sorts of windsent blossoms.

There was something characteristic of its owners about this semi-desert. Preoccupied as Chichele was, he became aware in some measure of this. It was charming; it was

pitiful. The wrong of it forced itself on his English conscience, but the sweet wildness and unusualness took him captive. It was all so Irish, so foreign, so attractive therefore. He forgot his promise to meet his people on the Limerick Road, he forgot everything but the spell that held him, walking under the apple-trees that were now loaded with blossom. He bent down one long slender twig, and held a bunch of little white velvet leaves and pink bloom so that Marion could smell it. She took the twig in her fingers and bent over it. As she lifted her face again, drawing a deep breath of enjoyment, her eyes met his. The clear pale red of the blossoms seemed to have passed to her face, and to illumine it with a glow that was almost unearthly in its beauty. Both stood still. Chichele kept his hold of the apple bough, only moving his hand so as to grasp hers with it.

‘At last!’ he murmured.

Marion’s colour changed, and her eyes drooped under his gaze. She tried to take away her hand. He only tightened his hold.

‘You gave me leave,’ he whispered across the little cluster of apple blossom. ‘Marion you told me to come, and I have come.’

CHAPTER XXIII

'Yet I have not seen
So likely an ambassador of love ;
A day in April never came so sweet,
To show how costly summer was at hand,
As this free spurrier comes before his lord.'

THE roan was whipped and spurred across the Lambert's Castle by-path, over the track on Knockstuart Bog with all its spongy sinuosities, out again on the Limerick Road, and galloped along it at a breakneck pace, only to reach the pretty castellated gates of Maxwellton in time to meet the O'Malley barouche issuing therefrom.

'Halloo, Chichele!' shouted Tighe cheerily. 'Everybody's gone. Did you lose your way?'

'No!' answered Chichele calmly. 'It is just as well I am too late. Just look at the state I am'in.' He turned the horse round, and exhibited his smart cords and gaiters all splashed and draggled. He had gone through the osier field at rather a headlong rate on taking leave of Marion, and until he had reached the patient Todd with his steed had not stopped to pick his steps.

'Lady Fredbury was *so* disappointed not to see you,' cried Mrs. Courthope; 'and you missed such a pretty girl, her niece Miss Greystone.'

Mrs. Courthope was extremely angry as well as alarmed at this last, to her conclusive, proof of Chichele's infatuation. She could scarce refrain from uttering her anger. Restrained, however, by the thought of the telegram, she said

nothing, and leaned back in the carriage with an air of ennui and fatigue which she made no attempt to conceal.

He made some curt remark, and dropped behind the carriage, slackening his pace gradually, until at least half a mile separated it from him, and he could see nothing of its occupants but the tops of Tighe O'Malley's and Mr. Court-hope's hats. He felt inclined to walk the horse until they had turned out of sight with the road itself, round the slope of the hill on the other side of which was Lambert's Castle. He looked at his watch. It was getting near seven. There was time enough; he could be at Barrettstown in time to dress before eight. He rode the horse into a clear pond beside the road, let him drink a little and cool his feet, and then pursued his way leisurely. It was still light; the sun was setting in a red and yellow furnace far away across the bog, and curious gold reflections lay on the surface of the pools. The dead tree stems that were standing here and there on its surface held out their shrivelled arms, gray when the light shone on them in the daytime, but now looking black and weird against the sky. Dark chasms opened where the turf had been cut; out of them a pale milky-like vapour was rising and stealing softly over the low places. It was a strange and mysterious-looking landscape that unfolded itself to Chichele's eyes: on one side the great black untenanted bog with here and there a rare particle of verdure, and more often dull gray sedges and dead waterflags than grass, reaching as it were to the very sunset itself, and silent and lonely as a desert, while on the other hand rose the hill slope of Lambert's Castle, with its chequer-like surface of fields, some square, some long-shaped, some three-cornered, one or two covered with a sparse vesture of growing corn, most of them as yet black and naked amid their fringes of unkempt, luxuriant hedges. The unwonted solitary scene began by degrees, as he gazed on it, to oppress him, though not altogether unpleasantly. The mists that crept and moved over the dark expanse like living restless things shaped themselves to the graceful image that was but too seldom absent from his thoughts, and in all the rich fires and crimson glories of the sunset Chichele could see but

Marion's long-lashed eyes, when they met his in the Quaker's garden that day.

'Sunday evening! I am to make Father Paul bring me with him to Lambert's Castle; until then! until then!' he said aloud.

A sudden thought took him to ride fast onward towards the house. But to look at it in passing would be grateful to him. He might even see a light in her window. He let the roan have whip and spurs until he was abreast of the Fir House. Not one gleam of light was there visible. All the windows to be seen above the trees of the garden were dark and silent. A faint bluish thread of smoke curling upward in the chill twilight air was the only sign of life about the place. Chichele sighed heavily and pushed on his horse once more, clattered through the town to the admiration of all the inhabitants, who seemed to be on the watch for him. They were just lighting up the shops. Lamps of paraffin with their reflectors threw a queer illumination on the cobblestone footway. Here and there a belated donkey-cart stood at a door. The Chapel House and the chapel—this last lighted and open, for confessions were being heard—were soon passed; and once inside the great gate of Barrettstown, Chichele left the gravelled drive, and made straight across the grass for the stables.

His servant was waiting with everything ready, and an expeditious toilet allowed him to enter the drawing-room at a few minutes after eight. Lady Blanche and Tighe alone were down. A log fire burnt cheerfully in the grate. There was only one lamp lit on a little table; the scarlet blossoms of the geraniums glowed like a red aureole around it. Tighe was reading the *Times*, Lady Blanche opening letter after letter.

'Well,' said Tighe cheerfully, 'how did the roan go, Chichele? He is a nice beast, but, alas! I'm too heavy for him.'

Chichele praised the horse a little absently.

'Did you find your letters?' asked Lady Blanche. 'Ida was in quite a state of mind about you this afternoon, and on coming in she was so put out—expected a letter or telegram and did not find it. People are so inconsiderate.'

At this moment Mr. and Mrs. Courthope entered. She was very pale, and seemed chilly.

'You have not been long dressing, Chichele,' she said acridly. 'I heard you ride into the stableyard.'

'Ten or twelve minutes only. What is this Blanche says about your being disappointed about a letter or telegram? Babies all right, I hope.'

'Mrs. Courthope started violently. In her anger and mortification on not finding the much-longed-for despatch she had allowed a plaint to escape her, which Blanche had now repeated.

'Penfold writes every day,' she said, with an attempt at a laugh. 'They are all blooming. No; it was something else.'

Dinner was announced, so nothing further was added. They passed into the dining-room; then the subject was not alluded to again, but nevertheless it exclusively occupied her thoughts. What could have happened! she mused; Creswell was not to blame. She was a devoted creature, who had been brought up in the family. Mr. Sheriff! Stay—it was Saturday, and he no doubt was out of town. She had heard that his private address was somewhere in Surbiton. Of course that was it, and until Monday morning she could hope for no reply. She might just as well have written, she thought, and some bitter reflections upon the whole race of Pursewell Sheriffs crossed her mind.

However, she was in the main, if imaginative, a practical-minded person, and she speedily reverted to her former position—that which had preceded the despatch of that forenoon. She determined to speak to Chichele that very evening, or the next morning at latest on the way to church. It might be best to wait until the next morning—'night brings counsel'—besides, she did not feel equal to an encounter with him immediately.

CHAPTER XXIV

'Riches are for spending, and spending for honour and good actions, therefore extraordinary expense must be limited by the worth of the occasion.'

AFFAIRS at Lambert's¹ Castle were being rapidly advanced now. Luke's wedding-day had been fixed, and the bride-elect was to pay a visit with all form and ceremony to Lambert Castle and her future family. As a matter of course a Sunday was the day selected. The Waterford city lady with the great fortune must be shown to the people, and as Sunday obviously afforded the most rational and feasible opportunities for that, Miss Delanty and her father were to attend last mass at Barrettstown chapel, and afterwards to spend the day at her future home.

This, ostensibly a friendly visit to make the acquaintance of her prospective relations, was in reality a tour of inspection. The Ahearnes knew this well, and the old people were concerned day and night beforehand, contriving and working to make everything appear at its best. They certainly did not do as some neighbours did in similar circumstances, *i.e.* borrow cows and calves and geese for the day to fill the byres and yard and give a fictitious air of property and wealth to their surroundings. Old Ahearne scorned such dirty tricks; nevertheless he ordered his wife to buy poultry for the dinner, and not decrease the yard stock, and he whitewashed the stables and the window-sills, mended the broken windows, and had the yard scraped and sluiced with clean water. The half shorthorn

cow was combed and rubbed and put in a prominent stall, and Harry Capel, who as a son-in-law elect had a hand in all their arrangements, received a good-humoured hint that he need not mention that *she* was to leave the farm with Margaret.

The preparations indoors kept pace with the rest, and were of an extent commensurate with the importance of the festival on behalf of which they were undertaken. A perfect regiment of ducks and chickens had been bought and slaughtered, and Peggy Lehan from Barrettstown was busy all day in one of the lofts plucking their feathers and stuffing the same into a large canvas bag. The kitchen was in possession of Juggy O'Leary, the 'professed cook' of the barony. She was a middle-aged woman, who had, what is by no means uncommon amongst the Irish of her class, a taste for cooking. Her temper, which was abominable, and her intemperance, which was notorious, though irregular, precluded her from obtaining steady employment. She had been engaged as assistant to the man-cook at Barrettstown during the stay of the visitors from England, and ought at this moment to have been in her place in Tighe O'Malley's kitchen, but she could not resist the temptation of the 'great performance' at Lambert's Castle, and had sent a message to the housekeeper that morning that she was laid up with a 'cold on her chest,' and would not in consequence be able for duty before Monday or Tuesday. Mrs. Ahearne, patient outwardly, but in her heart rejoicing over the rarity of such festivals, was sitting in the kitchen watching the consumption of her beloved butter and cream at the hands of Juggy O'Leary. Judy the servant-girl attended on both, showing infinitely more respect and obedience to the cook than to her mistress.

'I wonder,' grumbled she at last, 'when I will get time to clean myself to-day. There it is late enough now, and I want to do something for to-morrow before it is milking-time.'

'Well, go then, and be quick. Make no delay, Judy,' said her mistress.

Judy disappeared, and returned with a large hooped bucket, which she proceeded to fill with hot water from the great black pot on the fire. Then she groped behind the dishes on the dresser until she discovered a good-sized lump of washing soda ; she dropped it into the steaming bucket, and with it a piece of soap, and in company with this she betook herself to one of the empty fowl-houses.

'That creature Judy,' observed Mrs. Ahearne, 'I know well what she is after now. Dear ! she thinks as much of that hair of hers !'

'Tis the only good feature she has, God knows,' replied the cook, and then she resumed her histories of the doings at Barrettstown Castle.

Judy waited a while. Her bucket of water was too hot, and she felt too lazy to carry it across the yard to the pump. So she laid it down and ran round to the garden and along by the wall until she reached the window of the sitting-room, which looked out in that direction, stole cautiously under the pendent branches of the great yew-tree, opened the window, and squeezed herself in as far as she could.

The room was all in readiness for the next day. Two long tables covered with white cloths held glass and china borrowed from every neighbour within reach. Fresh-baked bread and cakes were ranged, some of them not long out of the oven pot and still smoking, on the side tables.

None of these tempted Judy. She had made good use of her opportunities that day, and had conveyed to a safe hiding-place one out of every three eggs that had been laid in the yard, and, with Peggy Lehan's connivance, a good bag of the feathers being plucked in the loft. Peggy Lehan would carry all these pickings and some others of older date down to the town that evening, and dispose of them as she chose and to her own advantage, for Judy's share of the spoil (some seven or eight shillings' worth) would not amount to more than a few pence, if indeed any transfer of coin took place, general goodwill and friendship being rather the consideration than pecuniary interest.

What her thieving fingers strove now to reach was a

large dish of fresh-churned butter, all in pretty little thick prints, which, stamped with a swan, with newly-gathered dock leaves on top of it, lay just out of reach. She strove and strove in vain. At last, in desperate fear of being caught, she plucked a sharp woody branch off the yew-tree, stripped it of its leaves, and with great dexterity speared two pats of butter off the dish. These she wrapped in a cabbage leaf and hid in her pocket at once. To fling away the yew branch, close the window softly, and run back to her bucket in the empty fowl-house, did not take her long. Once there she loosed her thick mane of hair, reaching to her knees when it was let down, and in one minute more she was scrubbing it vigorously in the bucket. The next thing was Judy's apparition, her upper story resembling a whipt cream or trifle, piled high in air, the froth glistening opalescent in the sun, as she dashed at a frantic rate across the yard through the door into the garden, and then pell-mell to the clear end of the brook that ran beside the boundary. Here she threw herself flat on the ground, half-blinded by the soap which had descended into her eyes, and crawling over and leaning on the stepping-stones, dipped her head into the bright running stream.

Over and over again did Judy splash her locks in the brook until every trace of soap was swept, hissing as it went, away among the cool pebbles and the little waterfalls. Then she gathered it all into her hands and twisted it like a rope, ever so many times, standing all on one side as she wrung the great glistening cable so as to keep the descending shower from wetting her skirts. When the last moisture was expressed, she went round to the sunny side of the stable-yard, holding her hair still fast in a twist, and climbed up on top of the wall. Then she shook out the cable in a thick loose mass like a sort of mantle round her; the sun, which was hot enough still, though the day was wearing on, began to dry it fast enough. It was for the sake of this that she had climbed the wall, and also to display her charms to Luke, Mat, old Ahearne, or any other member of the opposite sex who might be about. She ran her fingers through it, drawing out the long meshes and

tangled strands—it was drying fast, she observed with pride—holding them spread out in the warm light. She might soon proceed to the final stage of the process, that was to say, to rub in one of the two pats of butter which she had made her own for that special purpose. The other pat she would save to refresh its lustre in the morning before going to early mass with her mistress. When Judy saw that the last drop of moisture had been squeezed from the twist of hair which she was wringing with both hands she commenced to sing, as though a burden had been removed from her mind. She had a powerful voice, though it was not too pleasant for speaking purposes, and the air soon resounded to a ditty, one of those queer ‘Come all you’s’ which float about the southern counties, and which, like the ‘Shan van vocht,’ serve for all occasions and purposes.

*‘In the merry month of May, when the lambkins sport and play,
And the little birds do sing about the mountains,
A lovely maid I spied, down by the riverside,
And thus she did solillaquise the fountain.*

*“Oh! ye limpid strames, an’ ye fish that’s in the same
That delight to take your innocent divarshin,
Have pity on a maid that’s entirely dismayed
And deluded by love’s captivating passion.*

*He’s as tall as Agamemnon, aye, or any other Jarman,
And his eyes they shine like the stars above us,
And his lips so nate and swate, faith you’d take it as a trate,
For him to have a kiss whene’er he chooses.*

*I’d rather be a fly on his lovely lips to lie, wi’ the perfume o’
his breathing all around me,
Than to be a monarch’s bride all in Orienchal pride, an’ a
rattannee of sarvants to attind on me.*

*Hard fortune to the day Sargent Rooney came the way
And dilluded him to cross the salt say ocean;*

*Sure my appetite’s astray, all in foreign parts away,
Since Johnny the poor darlin’ sought permotion.*

*Oh! my petticoats I’ll tare, an’ the corduroys I’ll wear,
That Johnny the poor darlin’ left behind him,
And I’ll wander far and near, up and down and round about
The whole Uropian world till I find him.”’*

* * * * *

Luke meantime, in whose honour these extraordinary labours were undertaken, surveyed them all with scorn, real or simulated, and refused to help. His mother asked him

to take a spade and root away a great patch of nettles and docks just beside the stable door.

'What do I care how it looks?' he replied filially. 'If she doesn't like it let her clean it up herself. I see no sense in makin' such a strew for her. The place was good enough for me, so let it do her,' he snarled.

His mother paid no attention to this. Luke was proud enough of his intended and her fortune, as she knew, and so was she, and more glad than proud, for she knew that Luke would rather have had the little finger of a girl of her acquaintance than the great Miss Delanty and all her fortune; but Essie Rooney's father was a bankrupt. Peter Quin had sold him up the preceding Christmas, and had closed on the lease of the farm, and she was no match for a boy like Luke Ahearne. Luke was fond in a way of Essie, who was an extremely pretty fascinating creature, full of spirits, vastly different from Miss Delanty, but he knew too well his own value to think of compromising his prospects in such a way as that. He must marry money, to secure the lease of Lambert's Castle. Harry Capel was to get some of the best of the stock—so Luke chose to consider that portion given with his sister—that would have to be replaced. Margaret and Mary were taking the ready money as their share. Then the old people were to be thought of. No he could not marry Essie Rooney—that was a settled thing, and Luke often sighed over it. Now and again when he saw her at mass on Sunday, a wild thought of marrying her and going off to make a living in America would occur to him, but never for long, although he continually threatened his mother to put it into practice, and had actually once written to his cousins in New York, this, however, without making any mention of Essie Rooney.

'Luke! Luke, man, I say!' said his friend and confident Mat; 'one would think you were goin' to be hanged, not married. You have not a word to throw to a dog.'

It was three o'clock on Saturday; the dinner was over, and Luke and Mat were lying in the straw in the haggard, smoking.

Luke grunted and moved impatiently.

'You are a fool,' continued Mat good-humouredly. 'I know right well 'tis Essie Rooney you're thinkin' on, an' small good that'll do you, unless,' he added, 'you'd like to face it to America wid her, and lave the fader and moder to go in on Capel's floor.'

'I'm not going to play the fool,' muttered Luke; 'but I hate the sight of Betty Delanty, so I do.'

'She's good-looking enough, for I saw her,' observed Mat; 'an' two thousan' is a load of money, Luke: that's a fortune for quality. Look at Harry Capel, glad to take three hunder and a few beasts wid Margaret. And look at Joe Mulhall—every penny he's getting with Mary Rice is fifty pounds and a feather bed, and they only hold that farm on old Godfrey Mauleverer's promise. Tighe O'Malley bid Marchmont leave it as long as Joe and his father would be alive.'

'Well, they don't require money; so what's the sense of telling me about Mulhall? Sure *he* has only one eye! He couldn't expect to get much.'

'I'm not *telling* you about Mulhall,' continued the comforter unrebuffed; 'I am only stating that you have no reason to be complaining, seeing that you are getting a fine girl and a great fortune—for it is a great fortune entirely. Father Conroy was astonished, and told your mother he was to be asked to the wedding, for sure.'

'Humph!' was Luke's sole comment. Nevertheless he was comforted and mollified, as Mat, who was a good-hearted fellow, wished him to be. They smoked on in silence for a while, lazily watching the swallows, which had not long come, skimming and dipping above the stacks.

'Macfie, that Scotchman that travels with wool, was talking one night below at the hotel,' said Luke, 'and he told us there was no such thing in his country as our way of doing things. The girls all work there, and a girl will go out to service and earn. His father was a small farmer—never gave his daughters a penny, and they are married. He has a brother a lawyer and another a doctor.'

'I don't understand what way they have of living by us,

Luke ; but, take my word for it, there is no use in talking of other country people. They have their ways, and we have our ways. I do not like to see a faymale out in the fields, and I put it to you in common sense and reason, if the farmers' wives and daughters did the work here, how would servants get a living ?'

'Servants cost a deal of money,' grumbled Luke. 'Betty Delanty is a great fine lady entirely ; her aunt that reared her says she never put a hand to a thing in her life. It is a good job for me my mother will live wid us ; and they,' nodding his head backwards towards the house, 'may say what they like, Mat, I must get home a new side car for her as soon as the wedding is fixed.'

'You had better,' observed Mat. 'That is the worst of these big fortunes—they always require to be trated wit' more respect than girls that has nothing but their faces and their two fists. There, now ! I say to you, listen to that devil Judy. Lard ! but I do hate that girl.'

'I hate her too,' assented Luke cheerfully ; 'she's that dead ugly and forbiddin'.'

Then both lay back in the straw, smoking luxuriously, and listened to the notes—wild and woodland—of the songstress on top of the wall until she reached the verse—

*'And if my love should die in the wars, then so will I,
And permiscuous I will stand in ostentation.'*

'Sh,' breathed Mat, who seemed unaccountably stirred to sudden wrath ; 'Luke, the turf-heap's just round the wall ; let's take two good hard sods—do you slip round back behind and I'll fetch her on the right hand of her ugly head ; quick's the word—now fire when you hear me cough.'

'And our inimies will quinch and play blazes on the Frinch.'

sang the unconscious muse, shaking her hair in the sun—

'And will thus confound the—'

—Wow ! wa-ow ! wow !'

CHAPTER XXV

‘Believe not much them that seem to despise riches, for they despise them that despair of them ; and none worse when they come to them.’

‘A great state left to an heir is as a lure to all the birds of prey round about, to seize on him if he be not the better stablished in years and judgment.’

‘Look at that girl out there on the wall,’ said Mrs. Ahearne to the professed cook, ‘the conceit of her in that poll of hers ; she thinks the beat of herself is not in Cork county.’

‘Oh, look at her indeed, ma’am !’ responded the cook, ‘the impudence of her ! She has not too bad a voice, neither,’ she added as the song came in at the open door. ‘Faith, ’twould make you angry to see her. But, well, as I was tellin’ you, ma’am. At the Castle kitchen, the butter that head cook of O’Malley’s lady goes through, ’twould frighten you, so it would ! Oh, Lard ! they eats that venison, an’ birds, an’ they roasts em wit’ lovely butter, and they that—ugh ! the very cat would run out of de kitchen from the smell of dem ; oh believe you this, woman dear, quality eats tings you could not believe in.’

‘Anyway,’ said Mrs. Ahearne, whose eyes and thoughts were intent on Judy’s figure on the wall, ‘anyway this time I have made safe of de butter from her, for the day’s churning is all in the room ; never took my two eyes off it till I’d the key in my pocket.’

‘Servants,’ said the professed kitchenmaid in a lofty tone, ‘are terrible nowadays, so they are, whippin’ and pullin’ and stealin’. Oh Lawneys !’ she shrieked, ‘oh, those boys

are after knockin' her off the wall! Oh, ma'am! there's a toss for her—more power!' yelled the cook, advancing her head to the open window, 'more power!'

But at that instant another voice sounded above the applause of the cook and the screeches of Judy, whose ears had been boxed so violently by two sods of well-saved turf that she had lost her balance and fallen into the yard.

'Luke! Mat!' roared old Ahearne at the pitch of his voice, 'where are you scheming now? Mat, drive up those cows to the yard at once, and do you, Luke, yoke the beast to the spring-cart and go to the station to meet the Cork train for parcels, and then call to Peter Quin's—see your mother before you go—you hear me? she has messages for you.'

Mat emptied his pipe and put it in his breast pocket, then rose slowly and walked off towards the pastures. Luke took his way to the stable, and about half an hour later saw the spring-cart moving at a lively trot in the direction of Barretstown.

Contrary to the directions given him by his father, Luke drove into town first, got down at the post-office, and bought a Dublin newspaper, drank half a glass of whisky offered him by Jim Cadogan, and exchanged some banter with regard to his forthcoming matrimonial prospects. Then he drove up to Quin's shop, which was in all the bustle of Saturday afternoon.

Mrs. Quin, who was standing in the light of the shop door, examining the contents of a bag of feathers brought in for exchange, stretched out a down-laden hand, and greeted Luke with every semblance of cordiality. She knew everything about his intended change of life, and as old friends and neighbours she and Peter were invited to the dinner next day. Peter was in his railed-in high desk, talking confidentially with a farmer whose gig was standing outside. This farmer was a friend of his, who was in difficulties, and wanted to raise a loan. Peter Quin's name was a very good one on the back of a bill when he chose to put it there, which was rarely. On this occasion he was determined not to do anything of the sort. Grimes might talk as he

liked of his harvest—he was too sporting, too fond of races, and cards, and whisky; the Misses Grimes owed a long bill for dress as it was. Peter was in the act of refusing, in his usual jocular friendly way, giving reasons and arguments couched in terms of such goodwill and personal interest that no one could be offended with the denial, when his eye fell on Luke Ahearne's foolish good-looking face at the door.

'Here's your man, Tim, my boy,' he whispered aside to the would-be borrower. Then opening the door of the desk, he jumped down, and with a great demonstration of joyous welcome shook Luke's hand.

'My fine boy, how's every bit of you? Grimes, look at him! There's a credit to Barrettstown for you. She had to come all the way from Waterford, Grimes, to get the match of her money! See what it is to be handsome, there, haw! haw!'

Grimes entered into this with gusto. He was a dissipated-looking fellow, smartly dressed. Luke rather envied his Dublin-made clothes and knowing rakish air. He now passed his hand familiarly under Luke's arm, and dragged him towards the counter in the far corner of the shop. Peter Quin laid his hand on the youth's shoulder, and pushed him in the same direction.

'Luke, my boy! come and have a drink. Clean glasses there, Tom! I'll treat you both,' cried the host jovially. 'Not that tap, Tom, that. Go down and serve Mrs. Malone—I'll attend to this myself.'

He sent the shopboy away, went round behind the counter himself, and filled out two brimming glasses, which he laid before them.

'Now, Luke, my boy! here's her health in the native. Look at that fellow, Grimes! Look at him getting a Waterford lady with thousands! Off wit' your glass, man, till I fill it again for you. Here's to Miss Delanty, and long life to her!'

Grimes drank his measure of fiery raw spirit at a gulp. Luke asked for water, and poured his into a glass half filled with not very clear water. Peter Quin exchanged a malevolent grin with his friend Grimes.

'Come, now,' said the last-named, 'my treat, Peter Quin; another glass round! Ahearne, man, you're not delaying over that drop surely?'

'Let him alone, Tim Grimes,' rebuked the host. 'He's time enough—he's breaking himself in for married life and sobriety, ain't you, Luke? Here's to you, my boy! You deserve every farden an' more, for you have a spirit to spend it.'

The jibe in this roused Luke's mulish disposition. He swallowed the contents of his tumbler at once, and began to sip the fresh glass of spirit placed before him.

'Well,' said Grimes, 'I am going to Waterford Fair on Monday with a beast to sell. I have a cousin in Waterford, Ahearne, and if I don't get asked to Miss Delanty's wedding—I'll—' he emptied his glass, and then added—'lave it so!'

Luke, whose head was beginning to be affected by his libations, observed the empty glass, which indeed was set down with an emphasis that left him no choice, and nodded to the expectant landlord, throwing a sovereign on the counter as he did so with an ineffable swagger. It was pure and unmixed swagger, for he owed Peter Quin nearly seven pounds, and that worthy had already marked this addition on a tally below the counter. Peter Quin did not like to see ready money produced by his customers in this kind of way; it suggested a closed account and change of custom. He stared at Luke's sovereign for a second, then drew back with feigned astonishment.

'Put that up,' he ordered. 'I bid you dis minute!' He affected anger and outraged hospitality, and taking up the sovereign, forced it into Luke's hand. 'Your father's son, Luke Ahearne, might know better than trate *me* that way.'

Luke laughed coarsely, and made no other reply.

'Luke,' began Grimes, whose black eyes shone with an evil light in them, which the sight of the gold piece seemed to have evoked. 'I wonder is your father at home to-day?'

'Ay!' replied Luke nodding, as if the statement needed this confirmation.

'Maybe 'tis all the same to speak to you,' continued the other, glancing to Peter Quin's face as if for a guiding indication that he was on the right track.

Absolute impassibility was marked there, so he pursued—

'Maybe 't isn't, but sure if so it won't be long before you have your own, Luke—Lambert's Castle and your bank account. Begob, man! you will get to be a justice of the peace. An' why not?'

'An' why not?' echoed Peter Quin, 'why not indeed?' which saying, he cautiously moved away the third glass of whisky from before Luke. The youth was quite tipsy enough for his purpose; the second glass had been liberally watered, for Peter Quin had no notion of allowing Luke to get drunk in his shop; that would not be good business—Grimes might do what he liked with him elsewhere.

'What I wanted was to ask your father to oblige me in a small matter of an accommodation for three months—till I get in the hay, anyhow,' added Mr. Grimes airily, and to Peter Quin's admiration, he knowing that the hay had been sold three months before to a Connaught jobber, who would send down men to cut and carry it all off some morning before anybody was up.

'I had a dull winter, you see, and that horse I sold the English captain, you recollect, the brown—ay! you never fancied his action; you have the devil's eye, Ahearne!—he was returned on my hands. So I am behind wit' some payments, you see, on that account, and though I shall sell him at Waterford I know, I want your advice on this.'

Grimes was thirty years Luke's senior, and his tone of deference and submission was beginning to tell, although Luke well knew that the speaker wanted something, and in all probability would cheat him. He was perspicacious enough, although considerably excited by the liquor, to see that, but Luke's dominant quality was conceit, a thread of which, easily discernible, ran through all his actions.

Grimes and Peter Quin read him like a book.

'Look here, Ahearne! this is a three months' bill, as you can see.' Luke had never seen one before, but he took the paper and examined it.

'Now that rascal Flaherty below there at the bank had the impudence to tell me that he has too much paper entirely, and that I must get some responsible name to this as well as my own. Eh? is not that dam impudence of Flaherty?' This last question was a divergence from the main line of attack, suggested by a certain hardening of Luke's face as well as a warning frown from Peter.

'I wish you had time to come up to Oldbawn to look at the horse, Ahearne. He might suit you now, if you want one,' continued Grimes.

'I don't want one, Grimes, thank you.'

'What! not want a horse, Luke, an' you so fond of riding?' urged Peter Quin. 'Why, Grimes, there's not a man in this county could set off your horse like him. Look here, listen here to me both of you.' He leaned forward across the counter and caught both by the arm. 'I have it! Grimes, you shall take Luke to Waterford to the fair, to show off your horse for you—it will add twenty pounds to his price.'

Luke laughed feebly, and swallowing the last of his whisky, rose, a little unsteadily, to go.

'Will you come, man?' roared Grimes, standing up also. 'Yes, by Jove, come, Ahearne! We'll have a last frolic together. After that you'll be a sober old married man. We will go down on Monday by the early train. *I'll stand*,' offered the impecunious Grimes with an off-hand generosity which, taken with the cessation of all allusion to the bill, went far to remove Luke's suspicions.

'Is it a bargain?' he cried noisily, holding out his hand. 'Will you let me stand treat—your last treat that I will give you as a bachelor—and will you show the horse for me? Give me your hand, old man!'

Luke gave his hand, moved almost to tears. 'Monday morning at the train then. It will be the last time,' he added sheepishly.

'Your parcel, sir,' said Tom the shopboy, handing him the blue satin stock for himself, and the packages which formed his errand there.

These placed in the spring-cart, he mounted it, and

drove off at a wild rate in the direction of the railway station four good miles away.

Peter Quin and Grimes stood at the door watching him. Quin was the first to speak.

'He'll go wit' you Monday, Tim. Once you have him to yourself beyond in Waterford you'll easy get him to sign the bill. Bring it *here* to me, do you hear? it is not to be discounted in Waterford. Be careful now,' he enjoined, 'and keep your business to yourself. If any one could tell Delanty such a thing of Ahearne, signing away de girl's money before he got it even, we were all done together. You want the money immediately, you say, eh? Well, bring it *here* to me. Don't go to the bank and make public talk of the people. Flaherty would tell Luke's father in a minute. I will discount. Dere now, Grimes, good-night to you! Here is the house-steward from Barretts town. Good day, Mr. Flinn! How are all your fine quality and her ladyship above?'

CHAPTER XXVI

'My heart laments that virtue cannot live
Out of the truth of emulation.'

'I know a discontented gentleman . . .
Gold were as good as twenty orators,
And will, no doubt, tempt him to anything.'

THE eventful day came, and all Barretts town was agog to see Luke Ahearne's 'young lady.' Kitty Macan was no wise backward, and having heard a rumour, which proved to be utterly unfounded, that the bride-elect was to be at the ten o'clock mass, bustled across the osier field and down the road towards the town, keeping a watchful look-out for the car from Lambert's Castle. Her zeal was rewarded by a sight of Mrs. Ahearne and Judy being driven in by the servant-boy to the low mass. Her mistress could not prevail upon herself to leave Judy at home with the unrestrained range of the premises, so there she sat beside Mat, fresh-buttered and shining in the morning sun, her shawl well thrown back so as to display the glories of her hair. Mat, who hated her, observed her beginning to put on airs, and jibed her mercilessly.

'I wonder,' he observed, 'you would begrudge yourself a bonnet. Sure you might be taken for Miss Delanty dis morning, if you had only a hat or a bonnet. Morrow to you, Harry!' he cried to a neighbour, whose attention he directed as he spoke to Judy's self-conscious attitude. Judy saw this, and flamed crimson with wrath. At that moment the car luckily swept into the chapel yard, and

reprisals were perforce suspended. Mary Ahearne had walked in early to the eight o'clock mass to communion, and had returned before her mother left the house. She was to accompany Luke and her father to the mid-day, or last mass, with Miss Delanty and that young lady's father, a task she by no means prized, for she disliked the prospect of being stared at and commented on. Marion Mauleverer had been at the early mass also, and had waited outside the church to exchange a few words with her friend. She knew, of course, that it was her last day 'in the world,' as the quaint expression goes. There was some curiosity as well as sympathy in her greeting.

'I will walk with you as far as our gate,' observed Marion. 'I know you are in a hurry home. You must be very busy there to-day.'

'I believe so,' said Mary Ahearne absently. 'After all, the Delantys will have the worst of the job this day week. Ours is only a small affair.'

'Mary Ahearne!' cried some one behind them. 'Mary Ahearne, come back! Where are you going without your breakfast?' It was the postmistress's daughter Mary Cadogan. She overtook them, breathless. 'Don't think of taking that long walk before you breakfast.'

'I have no time, Mary, thank you, this morning. The walk will do me no harm for once.'

'Miss Maulever, I beg your pardon,' said Mary Cadogan, 'but look at the colour she is. Bid her come back with me. My mother has breakfast ready.'

Mary Ahearne's face was in truth of a most ghastly colour.

'Do go back,' urged Marion; 'and if not, will you cross the field and take breakfast with me? Mary, you must.'

'Mary, I am thankful to you indeed,' returned Mary Ahearne, 'and I will take a cup of tea with Miss Mauleverer—she is nearer to our side, you see, and I am wanted home to let my mother and Judy go to the ten o'clock mass. You are very kind to me indeed, Mary. I hope you said the prayer you promised me to-day.'

'I did indeed, Mary! I will go, and I will see you this evening.'

'That is a kind girl,' observed Mary Ahearne. 'It is a pity she is so troubled. She and her mother have dreadful trouble with Jim.' There was a tone that was not exactly charitable in Mary Ahearne's voice: it sounded as if this were a very commonplace subject. Marion shuddered from head to foot. Kitty Macan, who was the link of communication between Fir House and the nether world of Barretts-town, had once related a gruesome tale of Jim Cadogan's aberrations, and had been forbidden by Miss D'Arcy ever to name the subject again in the children's hearing.

They had reached the stile ere long, walking silently, for conversation seemed frozen, and crossing the field and garden found themselves in the kitchen of the mill-house. A bright fire was blazing, and Kitty was making breakfast. There were fresh eggs for Godfrey; a huge jug of still warm new milk was on the table. The teapot sat in the turf ashes waiting for Miss D'Arcy's bell. Marion was chilly; the fire was welcome to her, and the bustling human atmosphere of Kitty and her underlings dispersed the chill mental mist which contact with the unworldliness and asceticism of Mary Ahearne had cast around her.

'We will stay here—it is warmer, and Aunt Juliet is not up yet. Mary, you had better sit down there.'

Kitty Macan was offering her a stool close by the fire; Marion poured out a cup of tea. The nun-elect laid aside her prayer-book and yielded in spite of herself to the warm glow. Fly the greyhound, looked up at her with approving yellow eyes, and flapped his tail on the cobblestones of the floor.

'God bless you, Miss Ahearne!' said Kitty Macan, coming forward with a slice of bread and butter on a kitchen plate; 'you must ait a bit, my dear creature. Do, you are looking cruel bad dis morning, miss.'

'It is the long walk, fasting, to the chapel. She was at the altar,' said Marion. 'Kitty, get me some bread and butter, and if you do not make haste you will lose ten o'clock mass.'

'Bless us !' ejaculated Kitty hurriedly, turning to look at the eight-day clock. On doing this she stepped on the greyhound's tail. A prolonged yell warned her of this. 'Fly, you dam brute !' she cried. 'God ! I ax your pardon to swear this day. You are always in de road, so you are !'

Fly took himself out sullenly into the garden, and left them undisturbed. Gertrude was not down yet, nor Godfrey. Kitty went away to set the breakfast and take Miss D'Arcy's tray to her bedroom, and the servant-girl went out to feed the poultry. There was a quiet moment in the kitchen ; the only sound that broke the warm stillness was the chirping of the sparrows without. The sun streamed in at the lattice window through the budding branches of the rose-tree, and lighted Marion's head, giving bluish reflections to her dark curls, and illuminating the pale white skin of her forehead. Mary Ahearne looked at her a while in silence.

'You are fortunate,' she said slowly, 'and you are gifted, Miss Maulever ; you are all for the world—for this world.'

'What do you mean ?' asked Marion, feeling uncomfortable under the intense gaze of Mary Ahearne's solemn eyes. 'What is it you are saying, Mary ? What have I gifted ?' She crimsoned deeply. 'You are better off than I am—far—you——' She stopped suddenly. Mary Ahearne was getting up to go.

'You *will* know what I mean, and the time is not far off, if you don't now,' she replied. 'I will pray for you, Miss Mauleverer ; you need prayers. And let you pray for me : you are good. One thing more I will say to you—beware of Honor Quin. She envies you ; I can see it. I see many things, and they trouble me, though they should not trouble me, who am leaving the world, any more than if I were dead. My father and mother are building on Luke and his wife, and they will suffer for that. What can I do ?'

Marion gazed at her in astonishment. She was standing up, drawing on her gloves.

'You are good,' repeated Mary Ahearne, fixing her eyes

with a half-wild, half-wistful expression on Marion's face, 'and God will be good to you. He will not try you like me. Good-bye! don't come out. I can go alone.'

She disappeared down the garden, and before Marion could collect her thoughts and rouse herself to follow she heard the garden door close.

'Is she—is she happy and resigned, I wonder?' breathed Marion to herself. 'Poor Mary Ahearne! surely she must have some trouble on her mind. She thinks more of other people than I had imagined. I never liked her so well as this morning. After all, she will be more happy in the convent than in the world.'

Then something else, never very far from her mind now, took possession of her thoughts, and she rose from her seat and took her way half unconsciously down the garden towards the apple-trees in the cross walk.

She was standing now under the apple-tree where Chichele and she had stood together the day before. The blossoms were all fully out now, and paler of colour; the cups were larger, the smell different, sweeter, a little rarer. She bent her face over the pink cluster, bent it low down until the little tender petals brushed her lips, and drew in their fragrant breath with hers. As she let it go, tenderly and delicately though she touched it, two blossoms let fall a petal each; perhaps her own deep sigh loosed them. Marion started to see them; it was with a feeling of misgiving, as if she recognised an evil omen, that she lifted the tiny lost things and carried them into the house.

Late in the afternoon—it was almost evening—she and Gertrude started together with Godfrey for Lambert's Castle.

'I hope devoutly,' remarked Godfrey, 'that the Delanty faction will have departed for the Waterford train before we arrive. I saw the woman at mass to-day.'

'Did you?' said Marion carelessly. They were turning off the road into the breen.

'I did not, then,' put in Gertrude, withdrawing her attention from the hedgerow as she spoke, and walking nearer to her brother and sister. 'Kitty says she is big and

yellow and brassy-faced, and years and years older than Ahearne, and——'

'How dare you speak in such a manner?' interrupted Godfrey angrily.

'And,' pursued Gertrude impatiently, 'that it will take all her fine fortune to keep her in "fedders"—feathers, I mean; that was what Kitty said she heard in the town.'

This addition was received in stony silence by her elders. She returned to her occupation of poking the hedges with a long wand, which she had broken from a hazel bush for the purpose, the aim of which was to discover bird's nests by frightening their occupants off.

Before long, however, she threw away the rod and put on her gloves. They were in sight of the yard door, which stood wide open. Three or four strange vehicles, a queer old covered car, and two side cars were drawn up by one wall of the great yard, which was unusually clean and tidy. The horses had been taken out and were stabled. Some odd hens and chickens were running about excitedly, the rest were locked up out of the way. The house door was wide open, and a great stream of heat and noise seemed to come out as they approached.

The Mauleverers stood for a moment before the door as if uncertain whether to enter or not. Marion hung back unwilling, but their presence was soon observed, and Mrs. Ahearne came out in haste to welcome them and lead them in.

The kitchen was full, and so was the passage, of people coming and going to the inner room. Into this Marion and Gertrude were speedily conveyed, to find themselves at once the centre of all eyes. Although it was daylight still, a great paraffin lamp filled the room with its hot light and smell, this last all but drowning the fumes of the whisky punch; candles burned on the chimney-piece and on top of the piano.

'Miss Delanty!' hailed Mrs. Ahearne in a loud voice, 'this is Miss Maulever, who pays you the honour to call, and her sister Miss Gertrude.'

Peter Quin, dressed in a blue body coat with brass

buttons, moved to one side with an obsequious bow, thus allowing to be seen a tall youngish woman of twenty-seven or more, who rose from her chair and, squaring her elbow in the most approved fashion, offered her hand boldly to both the newcomers. She was not ill-looking, but her face was hard and at the same time foolish. She wore a costly silk dress, elaborately frilled and trimmed; a gold watch-chain hung closely over her shoulders; a huge silver-gilt locket, and massive-looking fringed earrings—these last the gift of her betrothed—completed the list of her decorations, unless a pair of kid gloves, the same colour of her dress, which she carried in her hands, be accounted such.

Marion shrank away, awed by her bold scrutiny, and made her way to Mary Ahearne, who was sitting in the window near Mrs. Quin and her daughter. Honor Quin was fully conscious of a much stiffer silk and finer gold watch-chain, although hers was not so obtrusively displayed as the bride-elect's ornaments. She sat very stiffly and decorously, limiting her conversation to replying shortly to the salutations of the young males among the company.

Peter Quin's face wore his customary fixed smile, and his cunning little eyes were making an inventory of everything while he exchanged the most complimentary and amiable speeches with Delanty, a shopkeeper in the same line of business as himself. Luke seemed rather pleased than otherwise. He was a central figure, and playing an important part, which circumstance alone put him in good-humour. Miss Delanty was not much to boast of in the way of looks, true; but she had a fortune of fifteen hundred pounds. He chose to call it so: in reality the sum amounted to only twelve hundred, which the town talk had magnified into two thousand. His staunch friend Mat had declared his intended to be a fine clever (big) girl, and had during the course of the day, out of pure good-nature, reported a variety of complimentary remarks which he alleged that he had overheard at mass. Luke, in his own mind, was persuaded that he had good looks enough for two. He was handsome; his blue satin tie seemed to repeat the colour of his eyes and lend golden reflections to

his blonde curls. His mother gazed anon at him with pride, and then let her glance turn with something of discontent to the swarthy countenance of her intended daughter-in-law. But to this would succeed a mental picture too often before her mind's eye of late—the horrible cabin in River Lane and Helen Talbot's fate—and she choked down her incipient dislike, and murmured a prayer of thankfulness that her future was secured.

Conversation among the young people was very stilted and difficult. The air, which seemed to grow thicker and thicker every moment, had perhaps something to do with the dull constraint which lay upon them. It was time now for the Delantys to leave. The car was at the door, and profuse and elaborate leave-takings became general. Marion and Gertrude slipped out unnoticed, and made their way into the garden. Godfrey had long ago preceded them, and was strolling under the beeches with Jim Cadogan and a couple of young farmers. Their figures could just be discerned among the tree stems, for the twilight was now falling. The girls, who did not wish to be seen by them, slipped into the shadow of the great yew-tree, and looked over the broken wall into the yard. Father Paul's house-keeper, Miss Johnston, had just arrived with a message that his reverence was coming along the road and bringing a young gentleman, and the departing guests were delayed in order to be duly presented to him.

Miss Delanty gave herself some additional airs and graces, which sat very ill upon her, for she had by nature a brusque, rough manner. Miss Johnston, as usual, imitating Miss D'Arcy, attempted to patronise her. Like Marion, however, she was put out of countenance by the bold black eyes of the stranger, and beat a retreat discomfited. After some clumsy *minauderies* with her intended, who told her to expect him the next day—whether it was done out of bravado or calculation Luke had, as the evening advanced, assumed a most lover-like bearing towards his betrothed—Miss Delanty departed with her father, whom a conversation with Peter Quin had destined to benefit by at least a couple of hundred pounds. That worthy had managed to

convey to Delanty an impression that he was being over-generous in the matter of the 'fortune.' The fine to be exacted by O'Malley for renewing the lease of Lambert's Castle would not be so large as was stated by the Ahearnes. Peter hinted that he had good reason to know this, and made it apparent to the rather bemused mind of his brother-trader that he held his information from better authority than that of the Ahearnes.

'You know, Mr. Delanty, sir, we are not always so poor as we state to be.' A dig in the ribs carried this innuendo home with effect. It was said openly before old Ahearne and his wife, who believed Quin to be speaking in their interests and on their side. He intended them to think so, but Delanty and he attached a very different signification to the words.

The car with the Waterford party was rolling away down the boreen now, and Peter Quin was standing a little apart by himself, apparently surveying the old walls of Lambert's Castle at the end of the farmyard. Marion and Gertrude could see him distinctly from their coign of vantage among the dark branches of the yew. His perpetual smile expanded to a broad grin that was not exactly pleasant to behold, and he rubbed his hands together.

'What is that Peter Quin thinking of,' whispered Gertrude; 'laughing there all to himself? Look, Marion! Horrid old man!'

It was impossible for him to hear her, but he started as though he had, pulled up his coat collar suddenly, and taking a pinch of snuff regained the company in the kitchen. Luke Ahearne was receiving the congratulations of his friends, and stood with a sheepish foolish face, the centre of a noisy throng. Mat was prominent among these, both his hands full of candles, for they were going to dance in the barn. Now that the formidable visitors had left, all tongues and hearts seemed brisker and lighter. Miss Delanty, although she had imposed on no one, had awed everybody. Her airs and pretensions, finery and jewellery, had had all the effect in the way of creating a barrier between herself and the Ahearnes' friends that she wished and in-

tended, but every one of them knew that in point of 'family,' not to mention 'old stock of the country-side' or 'blood,' she was nobody and nothing.

'Betty Delanty, wisha !' sneered a Capel. 'Mrs. Ahearne was a Fitzmaurice, and had a cousin a bishop in America, and Luke Ahearne—sure, everybody knew Ahearnes of Fiddlerstown—they were as old, God keep ye, as the fields itself.'

More whisky punch was made. A fiddle began to make itself heard from the barn, and one by one the company straggled across the yard, to where a great fitful glare of light began to grow yellower and yellower in the thickening twilight. More neighbours came in, and among them appeared a guest whom Luke Ahearne had little welcome for, and whose face appeared to him now like some not quite pleasant surprise—his old flame, Essie Rooney! A sprightly, rosy-cheeked little girl, scarcely twenty years of age, stepped into the kitchen, followed by a tall constabulary man. When Luke saw his mother shake hands with this man he guessed at once what had happened. Essie was married, or going to be. All the blood in his body seemed to rush up to his head, and stifling with difficulty the execration which rose to his lips, he flung out into the yard, not daring to remain. In the yard he found himself suddenly face to face with Father Paul and a gentleman, whom in the half light he did not at first recognise. Luke held out his hand to Father Paul, who expressed his regrets at not being able to come sooner, adding—

'I hope to make Miss Delanty's acquaintance this day week, and, Luke, this young gentleman has come with me to drink a glass of wine to your good health and your young lady. Mr. Ansdale, this is Luke Ahearne—a fine product of the county Cork, is not he? I baptized him, sir—and I deem it a great hardship that I am not to marry him, sir.'

'Gorra ! your reverence,' replied Luke with great seeming heartiness, 'you must share a good thing sometimes. A turn about is only fairness, you know. I'll promise you the job of burying me, sir.'

Chichele turned away; he had recognised in Luke the

man who had told him that 'a common name would not answer the Mauleverers.' He remembered the day well, wandering by the mill-house, which lay all shrouded in apple blossom, hungering so keenly for news of its inhabitants that he envied the very bird that might fly across its roof, that he felt forced to speak her name aloud to any chance comer, were it only the groom, the beggars, or the hinds on the road. He must say it aloud even to them, so did it possess him like a charm. His eyes wandered now hungrily from Luke's face to those of the bystanders in search, hardly of Marion herself—long and hope as he did, he scarcely dared so much—but of some token of her presence, some guide or indication. Nor was he disappointed for long; Gertrude's lovely brown curls caught and reflected the light from the open door, as she ran forward to meet Father Paul.

'Why are you so late? Oh! and you, Mr. Ans——; she had forgotten his name, or was too excited to say it. 'Miss Delanty is gone, and oh! Father Paul, she was so grand and fine—you ought to have been here. I say, I want to dance in the barn. Come and look at the dancing. And, do you know, there are *two* brides—really two—a Mrs. Moriarity, such a pretty nice girl. They are all admiring her; and she dances a jig on a door. I hear nobody can beat her or tire her. Don't you like a jig on a door, Mr. Andale? Oh! I always missay that strange English word—your name. I do beg your pardon.'

Chichele scarcely heard Gertrude. He held out his hand amicably to her, but she never noticed it. She was hanging on Father Paul's arm and pulling him towards the barn, whence the scraping of the fiddle and the rhythmic movement of the 'step dances' could be distinctly heard. He divined that Marion was not there, and began to pace up and down the yard impatiently, watching every figure that came and went, listening vainly for a sound of her presence. At last he spied in the half light a thick-set figure, which he recognised as that of the 'girl from the village,' Miss Quin, passing through a tumble-down door at the far end of the yard. Impelled by some instinct he

followed her quickly, and found himself in the garden among a thicket of heavy overgrown laurels. He stood still for an instant, and allowed her to go on before him into a dusky weed-grown alley that opened among the trees. Presently she called aloud, 'Mary Ahearne, Mary! where are you?' The utterance was harsh and coarse—he remembered it at once.

'Here!' answered a plaintive weak voice. It sounded far away among the tree stems on the other side of the old lawn. Chichele watched, and saw presently a black-hooded shadowy figure cross the ploughed portion of the lawn. This, as it came nearer, proved to be Mary Ahearne.

'Where is Miss Maulever?' questioned Honor Quin; 'and why are you out here, Mary Ahearne? My mother wants to see you.'

'Well,' answered Mary Ahearne reluctantly, 'I suppose I must go in. I'll go back for Miss Mauleverer—she is beyond.' She turned and retraced her steps.

Chichele turned also on hearing this, and ran as fast as he could round the garden to the point from which she had come, and plunged among the trees on the drive. He came up with Miss Mauleverer before Mary Ahearne arrived.

'You here!' she cried, rising startled from her seat.

'Yes,' he said, seizing both her hands; 'it is I, Marion. Marion, they want you to go. Don't, I beg! I must—must say something to you! Here she is.'

Mary Ahearne's pale face enshrouded in her black shawl was now before them.

'Miss Maulever,' she began trembling, for she saw and recognised Chichele, 'Honor Quin is wanting me in the house. Would you be pleased—maybe—you would rather—whatever you would like to do, miss.'

'I will come directly,' returned Marion, speaking with Chichele's eyes upon her face. 'Tell her—in a minute, Mary. I am going home with Father Paul. I shall follow you in a moment. That will do!' This last was uttered with a tone befitting Miss D'Arcy herself, imperial almost.

* * * * *

Father Paul and Gertrude entered the barn together, she pulling him by the sleeve. She wanted to see the dancing, and, child-like, enjoying it herself, wished him to see it also. A dance was just over, and Jury Foote, the famous blind fiddler from Newmarket, was screwing up his violin preparatory to making a fresh start.

'Essie Rooney is going to dance a jig. Here comes Essie!' shouted Harry Capel.

'Manners, Harry!' said Father Paul reprovingly. 'Give the decent woman her name, if you please, young man! She is Mrs. Moriarity this very day.'

'Hurroo!' cried Harry; 'more power to you, Father Paul! Luke Ahearne, the door, the half door, till we has Essie's jig. Essie! Essie! who will stand up to you? Say me! Essie, ah do!' he pleaded, 'now do!'

'Go long wit' you, Harry Capel. The impudence of you indeet!' replied Mrs. Moriarity, advancing with great dignity into the middle of the room.

Essie had an established renown as a dancer. She was a trimly-built, bright-looking girl, and walked with a springing light step. She had in truth been married that morning by Father Paul, who had made up the match himself with Tom Moriarity, and had made matters straight for the constabulary man with the sub-inspector. She was exceedingly pretty, bright, rosy, and saucy, with a curly mass of yellow hair and brilliant light blue eyes. There was a gleam of mischief in the said eyes now, as she watched Luke Ahearne, her old admirer, lift down the half door of the barn and carry it in for her to dance her famous jig Polthogue on. She looked all round the barn with a wicked glint in her eyes as she stepped up on the half door and marched with a funny semi-sedate air all round it, as if to pick out the best position. Jury Foote played a few preliminary bars. The word had gone abroad that Essie Rooney was 'up,' and Mrs. Ahearne, Miss Johnston, old Mrs. Capel, even to Judy, all thronged in, as with Tom Moriarity, himself an accomplished artist, Essie took the floor. Luke Ahearne, who remembered her prowess but too well, was leaning on the wall just where the light of a hoop of candles fell on his

face. Essie, to do her justice, knew nothing of poor Luke's financial embarrassments, of the terrible necessity laid upon him to marry money. She had been in love with him, and she thought him a cur tied to his mother's apron-strings because he ceased to 'talk' to her, and became engaged to a Waterford woman older than himself, all for the sake of money.

She thought herself jilted for the sake of Miss Delanty's fortune, and she despised Luke thoroughly therefor; not a trace of her old feeling for him remained. Her constabulary man was handsomer, bigger, better-looking, a sober man, too, she reflected, and well come; and he had married her for pure love of her, having seen her dance at a wake up in Newmarket. She would show Luke how little she cared for him, so, brimful of this laudable intention, she began her jig. She had pretty tiny little feet, encased in smart shoes which Tom Moriarity had got her as a present from Cork, and she kilted her neat frock in such a way as showed them properly. Tom Moriarity, no mean performer, began his steps. He was a fine, straight-built young fellow, and murmurs of approbation made themselves heard all round.

'That's what I call a real fit match,' said a neighbour farmer to old Ahearne; 'a fine handsome boy and girl. Look at the way she picks up her feet like a thorough-bred blood horse. 'Tis lovely, I protest to you.'

'Father Paul, sir, dat is the best-looking pair I see dis long time,' said an old woman to his reverence. 'It reminds of de good old times when we had real handsome people in dis country, your reverence. I do not like at all to see a fair young boy lose himself wit' a girl dat is not his equals. Such a skin as she have—and de hair of her—she is like a young kid, so she is, to see her dance.'

'Just so, ma'am, just so, indeed,' repeated Father Paul, justly proud of his own doings. 'Well done to you, Tom! Well done to you, Essie! It would have been a sin to spoil two houses with you.'

'Hurroo!' whooped old Ahearne, half crazed with excitement as Essie began the double shuffle and sidled round

the half door with the grace and lissomeness for which she had earned her reputation.

'It is lovely—beautiful! Luke!' said a bystander; 'is she not a grand girl?'

Luke was gazing at her with eyes in which a light not unlike that of madness was shining. He had cared for Essie Rooney with all the feeling such a nature as his, poor and shallow, was capable of, and now she added to her old power of fascination a new one—the most potent of all to such men as he. He looked round the assemblage; every eye was strained on her; every face wore the same expression of admiration; from all lips burst forth encouragement and applause. Even his father stood there open mouthed, half drunken with delight, following every movement with rapture. What a woman! envied by all, applauded by all! 'That was the wife for me,' thought Luke in his heart, raging with bitterness. 'That was the wife I ought to have had.'

Essie was triumphant—she saw Luke's face—the other faces—Jury Foote was doing his best, and she was doing him justice. The wicked spark glistened brighter than ever in her pretty eyes, as she capered and skipped round her 'peeler,' and when that particular 'step' came in its due time, she threw her arms round Tom Moriarity, and instead of slipping her head down past his face, or on to his shoulder, or tucking it under his arm, as the other girls did in the jig, she kissed her husband full on the mouth with a smack that made the rafters of the barn ring and raised a responsive yell of sympathetic delight from her impressionable audience.

Old Ahearne forgot everything. He stood and gazed at her with a feeling of intense enjoyment. It was as delightful to him as the Cork Park races. Even Father Paul's Milesian blood woke up and stirred in him. Gertrude stood as if entranced, making mental vows to coax somebody to teach her that particular jig. Mrs. Ahearne's eyes were fixed on her son's face, which was now ghastly white and now red, with a look of anxiety which she felt to be needless. Essie was married, and was going to Gal-

way with Tom Moriarity the very next day. Had she not known that she could not have asked them to the festivity. Luke's face had a terrible wild look. Luke indeed was in his heart wishing it were possible to utterly annihilate Tom Moriarity and Betty Delanty at one stroke. No one could admire Betty: she was a coarse-looking thing, and she was swarthy, and she was, if not old, 'getting on,'—she was five years older than he was—she could not dance. All these thoughts ran through poor Luke's dazed brain as he watched Essie.

The dance ended, old Ahearne ran forward and lifted her right off her feet.

'By the Lord Harry,' he shouted, oblivious of Father Paul and Miss Gertrude, 'you are a grand little girl, Essie, you are! Tom Moriarity, are you not proud of your wife? Come wit' me dis minute till I drink both your healths. Luke, where are you?'

But Luke had staggered out, sick and dazed. He turned into the byre close at hand and flung himself face downward in the nearest stall moaning actually with furious rage and jealousy. Mat, kindly faithful soul, followed him without delay and sat down beside him to try and comfort him.

'Luke, man! why Luke!' he began. But Luke struck at and cursed him savagely, and buried his head in the straw. Mat sighed and whistled, then he got up and shook himself, and made straight for the kitchen. Here he found without trouble that of which he was in search, and seizing a tumbler, he half-filled a jug with whisky, and once more on consolation bent, repaired to his unhappy master. This time he was welcome, and before long Luke was in a state of blessed oblivion, covered comfortably in the litter, forgetting and forgotten, but not altogether alone, for from the next stall, and divided from him by a thin wooden partition only, came a regular and monotonous trumpet note, the professed cook *soi disant*—Juggy O'Leary herself. She had roasted the last chicken and baked the last pie, claimed her due, and got it ungrudgingly, and there she was, her only companions the melancholy turkeys, whose domains

she had invaded, all perched above her head staring at her in wakefulness and repining.

Essie's dance once over, and the excitement caused by it having somewhat subsided, people seemed to have a consciousness of some flagging in the entertainment. Luke was missed, and some others of the young men seemed to have also departed covertly. There was not the same go and spirit among the dancers, upon whom the shadow of Mrs. Moriarity's superior performance seemed to rest. By degrees the greater number moved back into the house again. A large table was covered with food, and some of the visitors who had come a long way helped themselves to some refreshment in the way of solid food. But sweet biscuits and currant-loaves were the staple attractions, and 'sherry wine' for the women and girls, with porter and whisky for their male relatives, were lavishly provided. The more select guests sat in the inner room, Miss Johnston of Chapel House, Mrs. Quin, Mrs. Cadogan of the post-office, and some strange farmers' wives. Father Paul walked about at large from the kitchen to the room and thence out into the garden and yard. He talked to every one, and especially to the people who came from the outlying portions of his parish. It was growing late, and was now almost completely dark.

* * * * *

Mary Ahearne left Chichele and Miss Mauleverer standing together under the lime-trees, and retraced her steps to where she had left Miss Quin.

'Well?' questioned the latter, without moving from her post.

'She will come presently—directly,' said Mary. 'That young gentleman is over there speaking with her. Sure, we can wait.'

'Yes,' returned Miss Quin; 'I saw him come here with Father Paul. It is more than strange, so it is.'

She had suspected the motive of Chichele's presence, and had determined, part from envy, part from inquisitiveness and natural love of meddling, to watch Marion that evening. Knowing her to be in the garden she had repaired

thither, shrewdly guessing that Chichele would make his way there also. Nor was she disappointed; in fact her expectations were so quickly gratified as to confirm her half-formed suspicions into certainty.

'I will not go in,' she continued, raising her hand to her eyes, and peering from under it across the garden. 'It is a pity Father Paul doesn't know this. He little thinks what is going on, or poor old Miss D'Arcy either. There, I can just see them walking up and down, don't you? Look between the trees and you can see them against the light. Mary Ahearne, it is a burning sin, and anyhow that is a Protestant, that gentleman.'

'Well now, Honor, that is true, but after all, what harm? Don't think against charity. Sure, he is a friend of Father Paul.'

'Sit down here,' said Honor. 'Will this bench hold? No; here is a stone.' She turned up her black silk skirt carefully as she sat down. 'We are in the shadow of the hedge; they can't see us. I think they are gone out of the walk. Listen to me, Mary Ahearne. I know who that gentleman is. Flinn, that is house-steward at O'Malley's, told my mother that he is nephew to some old lord that has no children, and he is to succeed him. He will have an estate and title, and do you imagine he would dream of marrying the likes of those Mauleverers?'

'The *likes of those Mauleverers!*' echoed Mary Ahearne. 'Oh Lord! Oh, Honor Quin! what is it you mean by talking that way?'

'What do I mean? aragh!' sneered Honor Quin contemptuously. 'Sure, you well know what they are! What is the good of Father Paul talking of that old lady? If they are Maulevers, they *are*, and they should be where Tighe O'Malley is, and if they are not, they're not, and no more about them. It is all humbug! and well you know it; and to think a young gentleman that is going to be a lord could marry the likes of her. What are you looking at? 'Tis little he is thinking of anything of the sort. After all, maybe she has the bad drop in her like her father and mother.'

This was pure malignity, although it was worldly wisdom too, and Mary Ahearne was revolted.

'It is you that have a bad black drop in your heart, Honor Quin, and long I have known it. You are a jealous creature in your mind. There is not one in Barrettstown would say what you have said here to-night. Take care it does not come home to you. You should be ashamed to let such words cross your lips. Oh God! but I am grateful to leave such a world of deceit and treachery.'

She rose from her seat, and shook out her dress, as if to shake off the contact of her companion. Miss Quin rose also. She was frightened and a little ashamed, for she was suddenly seized with the notion that Mary Ahearne might go to Father Paul.

'It is no deceit,' she retorted. 'I have a good right to make a remark. Who is there here who would see what we see and not say as much and more? Every one in Barrettstown will say it to-morrow or next day. Why not, since they have cause?'

At that moment the sound of approaching voices and steps fell on their ears. Honor Quin seized her companion's arm and dragged her back behind the laurel clump, where both stood in silence. They heard a firm light step breaking the twigs and dead laurel leaves on the path, then the rustle that followed Marion's trailing dress as it passed over these. A sort of breath moved the dark damp air, a branch of the big tree that sheltered the two spectators stirred as his shoulder touched it; then a double shadow glided by—a shadow to Mary Ahearne, but Honor Quin's sharp eyes saw more than hers. His hands were clasped behind him; he was leaning slightly forward, close beside Marion. She was a little in advance, half a step perhaps.

'You *will*—you *will* write to——' She heard no more. The two voices died away on the night air. The rustle of their footsteps ceased, and all was again still; for a minute or two she could only hear her own and Mary Ahearne's breathing.

'There now!' she said, vicious and exulting. 'Will you believe me? What have you to say?'

Mary Ahearne for sole answer began to cry quietly.

'You are a fool!' observed Honor, whose voice had now a perceptible ring of complacency. 'What is the use of crying? But she is a greater one—a great deal, indeed. Let us go in. Come along, Mary; leave them here.'

'I will not, then,' retorted Mary angrily. 'Go in yourself, Honor Quin; I'll do nothing so disrespectful. You are forgetting yourself altogether. I'll wait here until Miss Maulever chooses.'

She sat down again on the bench, and Honor resumed her place sulkily beside her. After half an hour had elapsed Marion and Mr. Chichele passed again, having once more made the circuit of the garden, and this time Miss Mauleverer took cognisance of their presence.

'Oh!'—she stopped so suddenly that her companion had to turn back,—'Mary, I have kept you waiting. I am sorry; we had better go in.'

Chichele had stepped on in advance.

'Not yet—a moment,' he pleaded, ignoring the presence of the two girls. 'You don't want to go in yet. Father Conroy is not going before ten. We are all going home together. Don't go in. I shall tell him I kept you here.'

'Oh! I must. I think, Mary, I am keeping you—both of you,' she added, noticing Miss Quin's presence.

'Oh! not at all, Miss Maulever,' added this last, in her most subservient amiable tone. 'We will wait for you as long as you like. It is so nice out here in the air. I would rather be here than inside.'

Neither of the people addressed took any notice of this sincere declaration. Chichele hurried Marion away impatiently, and a few steps took them out of sight now in the gloom.

'You don't *want* to go? You cannot go into that crowd. Stay here,' he whispered to her. 'Stay with me a minute longer.'

The bitter sweet of the cherry-laurel blossoms filled the air; the drowsy chirp of some dreaming bird made itself heard from the thickets as they brushed against the boughs of the evergreens, and the little blossoms of the spikes of

flowers dropped on their path, carpeted as it was by velvety moss and lichens. Chichele took Marion's hand in his, and led her onward. They passed the front of the old house. It looked like the ghost of a house. The empty windows were perfectly black, and through one or two or them, the ruined wall behind having disappeared, the sky could be seen. Melancholy by day, at night it was sepulchral-looking, and the great lonely yew-tree with its drooping trunk and long trailing branches, that stood at one end of the deserted front, was like some solitary watcher mourning and faithful to the last. It was clear, though dark, and the night air that swept across the fresh ploughed land, and through the budding trees and hedges, was full of the very breath and essence of the spring. A far-off echo of Jury Foote's violin seemed to float overhead, a mere vibration, just audible now and again, as the night wind that sighed at intervals through the trees brought it to them. He was playing a wild plaintive air. Some one was singing—only a faint echo of the voice reached them. Now and again they both stopped to listen. Floating thus on the wind the quaint weird notes had the dreamy indistinctness of an Æolian harp, full of sweetness and some undefined sadness.

Presently the music ceased, and through the open yard door to which they were now close came a hoarse cry of applause, clapping, and stamping.

'You don't want to go *there*?' he said in a voice which plainly evinced disgust and impatience. 'Come, take one turn more with me. How and why are you here?' he asked her abruptly.

'I came with my brother and sister,' answered Marion simply, 'because it was the last evening that Mary Ahearne was to be at home. She is to enter the convent to-morrow, and her brother's intended wife was here, and——'

'But what have you to do with these people and their affairs? Does your aunt——' He stopped. The mention of Juliet D'Arcy brought before his mind's eye the picture of that queer room in the Quaker's house; and the crippled figure of that strange old woman appeared before

him in all its melancholy quaintness. 'Poor old broken-winged bird!' he thought. 'What can she do for these creatures?' Then he thought of Tighe and Lady Blanche, and their share in the matter of the Mauleverers' poverty and degradation. But again, what could they avail? Father Paul was excellent, and did his best according to his lights. How was it all to end? what a world this was! He thought of London and its enormous whirl, and then the contrast between it and this curious forgotten nook between bog and river called Barrettstown, lying at the gates of O'Malley's house and living its own life far away and apart from all the world beside. He had never before thought of Barrettstown save as a place where one posted letters and gave coppers to the beggars, who seemed to form the chief part of its population. There was something very strange and odd in it all. These farmers' people, the Ahearnes, were unlike any others of the same class anywhere else. The music and dancing and singing, the simplicity of their ways of living, the queer wildness and strangeness of it all, the manner which everyone of the people seemed to have—together, he remembered nothing at home or in Scotland which at all resembled this. The farmers and the gillies on his uncle's estate in Ross-shire were a vastly different race, interesting perhaps, but in no way uncommon. There was no comparison, no analogy between them. Of his own country-people of the same class Chichele, as a matter of course, knew nothing. Mrs. Courthope provided the peasants about Courthope Manor with port wine and petticoats, saw that they went to church and made curtsies to their betters, and now and again trained, as the reward of merit, their sons and daughters for domestic service. That was all simple enough, plain sailing in every way. Then, as for the next class, the shopkeepers and farmers, the analogues of the Peter Quins and Ahearnes. He knew no more of them than he did of the inhabitants of the open sea at the North Pole, and had as little curiosity concerning them. In fact, he had that almost religious horror of every rank of society below his own which it seems to be the duty of the well-bred Englishman or woman to entertain and express.

Tighe O'Malley, when he gave himself the trouble to think about that personage, puzzled him just as much as he did his brother-in-law, Jack Courthope. What did he mean by his strange talk about, and discussions of, his people. He seemed to be always explaining and apologising for things. 'The people seemed a harmless, amiable lot. Old Ahearne was civility itself—courteous actually, more thoroughly well-mannered; Chichele reflected, than a great many Englishmen of his own circle of acquaintance—and yet, what an extraordinary jumble the entire thing was! Every man in the place was probably a Fenian, and, according to that old sportsman Marchmont, Godfrey Mauleverer was on the high-road to being a 'centre.' 'If they are consistent to their own principles,' reflected Chichele, 'I shall be shot to-night—sacrificed on the altar of Hymen and Erin together; and yet they are all as civil and friendly as if we had known each other all our lives, Sassenach and all though I am. But what on earth has she to do with these people?'

Over and over again, but at intervals, this thought recurred to him as he walked beside Marion. He could hardly distinguish her features now; only at times a radiant light from her large soft eyes fell on him. 'What was she doing here? Why was she here? Why am I here?' he said to himself suddenly. 'What is to be the end of this?' and a sudden stinging pain ran through him. They came at that moment to a turn of the path where an opening in the trees allowed what faint light there was yet remaining in the sky to fall on her face, and gave passage to a faint night-breeze, a mere breath of warm air that stole across the grass fields on the slope of the hill. Chichele lifted his hat and felt it cool his brow, which had suddenly flushed and heated.

'I am surely mad!' he muttered to himself. 'What—what is to be the end of this? If I am to leave her it must be now! this instant, if ever!' He scarcely breathed—he could feel his heart beating so strongly that his ears seemed full of the sound of it.

'Marion!' he said, after a long silence.

She turned her head for reply, and looked at him. He tried to speak, but no words came to his lips; all the

light the heavens contained seemed to be reflected from her white brow, her deep trustful eyes.

He took her hand and held it in his silently. Once again the little light wind gathered and spent itself in a deep odorous breath upon them both, lifting and stirring the little dusky curls that clustered on her temples, and playing on his pale face with a caressing touch, that seemed to carry away his doubt and distrust as some unreal dream.

'Marion!' he said, speaking impulsively, 'I want to see you again. When am I to see you—where? May I come to the garden? I tell you I must. I shall come in the morning.'

'I have my lesson at the convent to-morrow morning at eleven.'

'Lesson?'

'Yes, I have to read Italian with Sister——'

'The afternoon, then,' he continued, quickly and impatiently. 'I must show up at home at lunch. I shall come after lunch, about three—the same time. Shall I see you? But——' He reflected that Gertrude, and not improbably Godfrey, were sure to be about. He paused a second. 'Meet me on the river-side, will you? You know the woody place above the weir—will you come there to-morrow afternoon? You will!' He kissed her hands over and over again.

Then they turned, and a few minutes saw them, followed closely by Mary Ahearne and Miss Quin, entering the garden on the way to the house in search of Father Paul. Him they found standing at the door, watch in hand, peering about him in the thick gloom.

'Marion, child! Marion!' he called impatiently. 'Do you know that it is ten o'clock? Half-past ten! Come, child!'

'Half-past ten!' echoed Chichele mentally; 'and I was due in the billiard-room at ten. How fortunate that I ordered a horse! Won't I take it out of that animal! Good-night. Father Conroy, I must start immediately, Captain Marchmont and Lord Fredbury are there, you know. I was to have been back by ten.'

'There is a short cut, my dear Mr. Ansdale,' replied

Father Paul, 'but you do not know the short cut. Ahearne, have you any one could take Mr. Ansdale down the straight way to the road?'

'I will, your honour—your reverence! I will take the young gentleman down in two minutes.' The speaker, Judy, jumped forward, setting down, and splashing, as she did so, a can of water which she was in the act of carrying into the house. Her motives were mercenary, it need hardly be said: she divined a gratuity in the air. Chichele made his adieux hurriedly, and followed his strange guide out of the yard.

'This way, your honour,' said Judy, making a sudden turn to the right hand and jumping with considerable agility over a bank. Chichele followed her, not without some misgivings. He thought at first that she was leading him in a direction contrary to that in which lay the entrance to the breen, where his horse, in custody of the faithful Todd, was in readiness. Judy put down her head between her thick shoulders and set off at a quick trot diagonally across the field. Chichele kept close behind her. She had on a dark stuff dress, and he feared to lose sight of her in the darkness. He had to run to keep up with her, although she was not running. They soon reached a field which he recognised as that where he had rescued Marion from the ram. That hero was absent, however, and Judy scuttled across it to a gap closed by a cart. She squeezed by this with considerable difficulty, and then halted for a moment.

'Your honour must just step close to me now. I'm taking you over the bog. Look there! it begins! Mind your feet, sir, now.'

Without more ado she plunged straight ahead into the darkness. Chichele followed her confidently; he recollected the day on which he had attempted to follow Miss Maul-everer, and by a cross cut to intercept her on the road. He devoutly wished that this trip into bogland resembled its predecessor in the matter of its being daylight. They had reached black bog now, there was no grass or moss underfoot, and very little light above or below. Large

pools glistened with a sinister lustre to the right and left of them ; once a startled bird rose, and with a sleepy shriek winged its way noisily into the gloom.

'Tis a horrid road, sir. Mind yourself! Now we be coming to de worst of it after you crosses dis fence.'

Judy uttered this reassuring deliverance without turning her head, and Chichele had difficulty in understanding her, so thick and indistinct was her voice. The fence crossed, they directed their steps towards a patch of heather and furze which rose gently in the centre. It was rough and muddy at the same time : Chichele had to follow his guide round bits which even in the dark looked plashy and false. Judy jumped from tuft of heather to clump of gorse, seeking always the highest ground and, it seemed to her pursuer, the roughest and most difficult. They stopped suddenly, breathless, just where a ditch of black water divided them from the hillock.

'Now, sir,' said Judy, 'your foot dere behind me. Steady now—here—tank God you's safe. De road is just de oder side now, your honour.'

She was scrambling up the side of the hillock now, and in doing so caught her foot in a furze stump and fell or rather stumbled. Chichele, owing to this delay, got ahead of her. A few steps brought both their heads level with the top of the hillock, and there before them in an open space extending about fifty feet every way a strange and alarming sight fell upon their eyes.

A band of men whose backs were turned towards them were standing shoulder to shoulder, and performing some evidently military evolutions in complete silence, no sound whatever accompanied these. Their feet made no noise on the soft turf, not a word was uttered. A queer whirring kind of music suddenly burst upon the air, and seemed to issue from a covert near hand. Chichele, looking in the direction, caught sight of a red-haired boy, ragged and bare-footed, who was squatted at his ease in the centre of a bush playing industriously on a large Jew's harp, his whole soul evidently absorbed in the endeavour to get a Christy Minstrel tune out of his ungrateful instrument, at which he was squinting with all his might. By Chichele's side stood

Judy, her hands held up in an attitude of genuine terror, her jaw dropped, and her eyes protruding and rolling from side to side. Not long, however, did that astute personage delay to recover herself and shape her course of action.

A prolonged and hideous screech rang out through the darkness, followed by another and yet another.

'Fairishes! Oh Lard!' she vociferated. 'Fairishes! Don't look at dem, your honour—oh, don't! As sure as you live you'll break your leg inside of a week if you looks dat em.'

She seized Chichele by the arm and dragged him backwards with a force there was no resisting down the slope. She was too late, for he had recognised Godfrey Mauleverer's tall figure before he had succeeded in hiding himself in the heather. At the first echo of Judy's warning the whole band, who were in the act of being drilled by Fenlon, lay down flat on their backs. Had Judy been content with one signal they would have remained in that attitude until the chance disturber had passed, but in the exuberance of her zeal she overdid the thing, and these warning notes signified to the band that dispersal was needful. Therefore the prone warriors took to the bushes, and poor Godfrey, ever the victim of an unkind fate, displayed himself right between the sky and Chichele's eyes. As for the acolyte in the heather bush, he stopped his music and vacated the place as expeditiously and silently as a rabbit. Judy meanwhile dragged her victim along, all the time uttering yells, warnings, and imprecations, and never loosed her hold until the white shining high-road lay before them.

'Now, your honour, dere you are safe, and a rale short cut. We's done it in no time.'

Half an hour at least had been saved, and Chichele stunned and puzzled as he was, acknowledged this by a tip which brought a volley of blessings on his head. Judy ran up the road to the gate of the breen and sent down the horse, which had been waiting for nearly three-quarters of an hour, and before long he was galloping back to Barrettstown at a furious rate. He rode to the stables and, scarcely waiting for the groom to catch his rein, jumped off, hurried

upstairs to change part at least of his dress, for his guide had not stopped to pick her steps in her headlong career. He had been prudent enough to exchange his evening shoes for a pair of heavier leather before going out—matter of self-gratulation now, as he surveyed the bog stuff and mud with which these were loaded. Five minutes later saw him, cigar in mouth, saunter into the billiard-room.

Lady Blanche and the ladies were there sitting on a raised bench by the wall; she was talking to Mrs. Marchmont. His sister was playing a game with Lord Fredbury. Two pretty girls were looking on, but half interested spectators. They brightened visibly on his entry.

'If you only knew where I have been,' he said to himself with a smile, as the image of Lambert's Castle rose to his mind's eye—the noisy and excitable, though good-humoured and amiable crowd, the barn with its fitful illumination showing the whitewashed walls and cobweb-festooned rafters, the indescribable odours, peat, whisky, straw, and lemon-scented hair oil,—above it all the sound of the never-ceasing fiddle, and in contrast without, the still darkness of the neglected garden overshadowed by the ruin of Lambert's Castle, the night air all perfumed with the new grass and the budding trees, and Marion beside him and her hand in his. He heard his sister's petulant remonstrance as if he heard it not, and resumed the conversation which he had held during dinner with one of the pretty Miss La Poers at the very point where he had dropped it when the dinner was little more than half over.

Mrs. Courthope had observed her brother rise suddenly from the dinner-table and leave the room without a word of excuse or explanation. Two hours had elapsed since then, and now she saw him coolly resume his place without one word even to Lady Blanche. She longed to hear Tighe's abrupt questioning, which would save herself the trouble and risk of inquiring; but Tighe, obtuse as usual, had forgotten him. Tighe indeed was deep in some news which his agent Marchmont had brought him. Mr. Courthope, who had also heard the news, looked grave as well as bewildered. A good-looking young sub-inspector of constabulary with

a quasi-military air was talking mysteriously to the group of gentlemen.

Chichele began to speculate whether the nocturnal drillings which he had just witnessed formed the subject of their conversation. That thirty or forty young fools should practise the goose step to the music of a Jew's harp on an island in a bog did not appear to him very alarming. He seated himself beside Miss La Poer, and entered into conversation with her. She was an Irish girl, but of quite another sort, as he told himself—colourless and blonde. Her features were exceedingly pretty, but the eyes, which were small and too close-set, spoilt her face. Chichele kept Marion's face before him only too distinctly, and now, looking at his companion, compared it with hers all to her disadvantage. After a time he sighed with impatience, and rising, sought the group on the hearth-rug.

Of this the sub-inspector was the hero and centre. He was saying to Mr. Courthope in a very self-important tone, 'I cannot possibly mention my sources of information. In times like this, in the midst of a crisis, we must make use of every means at our disposal.'

He was an agreeable sort of man, and possessed an accomplishment or two which served him in good stead in North Cork. He could play the banjo and the piano both with a whistled *obbligato*. Lady Blanche had a poor opinion of him, though he industriously collected all the interesting items of news in the neighbourhood for her. He was just a thought too subservient of manner: she often compared him in her own mind to one of the professional poor in the town—the same anxiety to please, the same inveterate habit of presenting the agreeable angle of things. She looked at him now over the top of her fan, and recognised this idiosyncrasy in full play. The sub-inspector with his Irish facility had diagnosed Courthope precisely, and, laying it on thick, was dilating on the 'state of the country.'

'I say,' began Chichele, 'do you really think this is a crisis? What interests are they that are involved? Surely these ignorant unarmed people don't dream of upsetting the Government! Are they all mad?'

'My dear sir, it is a question I should not like to answer. The Irish'—the speaker was Irish himself—'are fanciful enough, mad enough for anything. This much I can say, no one's life is safe just now.'

'Do you mean that a rising is imminent?'

'Again?'

The sub-inspector had predicted so many risings that he did not like to make a definite assertion, so he contented himself with saying that raids for arms were being made on gentlemen's houses, and, in most cases with success, that large importations of weapons of warfare had come to his knowledge recently. Peter Quin had conveyed to him intelligence of some barrels of rifles which, labelled American flour, had been sent to a general shopkeeper in a mountain village. Chichele listened with a feeling half of amusement, half of surprise. It was difficult to reconcile these alarm-laden tales with the sight of the people whom he had left an hour ago. As for the drill party, he thought of the Jew's harp and burst out laughing, they were not to be taken seriously. A band of poachers was infinitely more important, taken all round.

'Do you know of the drilling at night, and—' he suddenly bethought himself of Godfrey and stopped—'when you succeed in catching the fellows engaged in it how are they punished?'

'If there was martial law,' repeated the sub-inspector, 'and I wish there were, we could make short work of the fellows. As it is, they are locked up, and at the assizes will no doubt get twenty years penal servitude, or life sentences.'

Chichele shuddered.

'It depends very much on what we know against them,' continued the sub-inspector. 'To my mind they ought to be led out and shot in batches at once. Much more merciful way of treating them!'

Captain Marchmont, to whom all this was no news, had drawn a little aside with Tighe O'Malley, and was giving him an account of the approaching wedding at Lambert's Castle.

'The Ahearnes are marrying the son to a girl from Waterford; she is said to have fifteen hundred. Well! put it at a thousand,—and the daughter is to be married to Harry Capel of Larkshill. They are giving her three hundred or two-fifty, and the eldest girl is to enter the convent, and gets a dowry, I suppose, of equal amount.'

'By Jove!' ejaculated Tighe, 'and the place all in dilapidation. I say, Courthope, just listen to this, will you? You saw the farmhouse at Lambert's Castle—the miserable little shanty, you called it. Well! imagine the man who holds that place from me on a lease which expires next year giving his daughter five hundred or so——'

'Five hundred *between* them,' corrected Captain Marchmont. 'One is to marry a young farmer who has a sister and a father and mother to support. The sisters have a lien on the farm—practically all the children share equally, daughters and sons alike. This can only be paid off by his finding a wife with a dowry enough to discharge these claims. This accomplished, husbands are soon forthcoming on the same terms, most likely, for the sisters.'

'And what becomes of the father and mother?'

'They give up the farm to the young couple, retaining a room, a cow, a plot of potatoes, and diverse other little matters, and——'

'And all quarrel ever after,' supplied O'Malley with a grin. 'I say, Marchmont!' he added, 'you know I never thought much of Ahearne as a tenant. That lease is expiring now, and I don't think I shall accept him as a tenant.'

'He is prepared to pay a fine,' observed the agent. 'Of course there are plenty of people in want of farms; there always are. Mrs. Cadogan at the post-office would gladly offer a price for a lease. She would not like to bid against Ahearne, to whom I promised the renewal.'

'You did!' exclaimed Tighe.

'Yes, a year or two ago. He came to me at the office with his rent, and I promised him the renewal, telling him, of course, that he must expect to pay a fine.'

'Did you name the amount of the fine?' questioned Tighe O'Malley.

'I told him he need not expect to get it for less than seven-fifty.'

'You did? Eh, well I can tell you I think Lambert's Castle worth more than that.'

'Worth?' echoed Captain Marchmont.

'Why, look at Ahearne giving his daughters fortunes, and the son marrying a large fortune. Oh yes! they can afford more than that. They have some of the best land on the estate.'

'And some of the worst; and they have improved the land,' added the agent, who now began to watch O'Malley's face, seeking therein for a sign which he expected to find, to wit, an indication of an offer made by some one else 'behind Ahearne's back.' Captain Marchmont knew Tighe's insatiable need of money, and indeed so did other people, in Barretstown as well as beyond it. Quin the shopkeeper, a Gombeen man, had an appetite for land as keen as that of Tighe O'Malley for pleasure. Marchmont had been favoured with many and diverse hints from him of late concerning the Ahearnes and their affairs. To all these he had turned a deaf ear; but on that very day as he was coming home by the Limerick Road he had met Quin and his wife on their way to Lambert's Castle, and Quin had asked a 'few words' speech' with him. Captain Marchmont recollected with disgust the cringing servile manner of the Gombeen man, standing hat in hand beside his horse.

'Whatever the Ahearnes offer for the place I will give above them,' he had said. 'I have a fancy for that farm of land,' were the old wretch's words.

He had made him no answer beyond a curt nod. The agent wondered to himself now, as he looked at Tighe's face, if Quin, who no doubt was aware that there was a promise between him as agent and the Ahearnes, had gone straight to Tighe O'Malley. This last, however, would have let out the fact; he was impolitic and indiscreet to a degree, and knew this of himself well enough, although he called his own failings by very different names. Captain Marchmont felt convinced that Ahearne's chance of the lease was a poor one indeed. His promise counted for

nothing, as he had reason to know, and he felt sorry that he had allowed old Ahearne, for whom he had a strong feeling of respect, to carry away any false ideas. Ahearne had held Lambert's Castle for thirty years, and had built the house and outhouses. They were badly and cheaply built, of course, and were now in a state of undisguised, in fact ostentatious, dilapidation. Naturally, seeing that the lease was running out, it was not to Ahearne's interest to offer temptations to outsiders. Tighe O'Malley was doing no more than any one else in his position. The farm had increased in value since his predecessor in the estate had leased it to Luke Ahearne. Land everywhere had gone up. Three pounds an acre, good and bad, was the rent of Lambert's Castle. Captain Marchmont was an English parson's son, and knew well that no English farmer would consider the land worth half that rent, even minus the heavy fine exacted for the privilege of paying the same rent. Of late years, though, he had ceased to draw comparisons, even in his own mind. His wife often told him that he was becoming Irish, to which he invariably replied that he was trying to do so. O'Malley was embarrassed for money; and Quin, partly urged by a desire to hold land, and in part, the agent suspected, moved by sheer malignity, might be looked upon as the future holder of Lambert's Castle.

'Do these people know the penalty of—eh—their extraordinary doings, rebellion, and the rest of it?' Chichele spoke, addressing the police officer.

'Oh yes! no doubt of it!' replied this last.

There was a general move now. It was time to retire for the night. All the guests, even the Marchmonts, were to sleep in the house. It was not safe to drive home even with a police escort.

'What do they mean? What is the reason they rebel?' asked Chichele.

'Original sinfulness,' replied Tighe with a conviction, almost as if he believed what he was saying.

CHAPTER XXVII

'The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poison more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.'

LONG before Judy, who indeed made a long pause on the way back, had returned from conveying the young English gentleman by the short cut through the bog, a good number of the guests had departed. The Cadogans, mother and daughter—Jim had vanished an hour before—led the van with Peter Quin and his wife. Father Paul followed with Gertrude, who clung to his arm, for although she laughed at Kitty Macan's stories in the daylight, she was genuinely afraid of the 'good people,' they affected her after dark. Miss Johnston joined the townspeople, who walked on in a body a little in advance of Father Paul and his party. This was done purposely to show their respect to him and sense of their own inferiority, and it was to bridge over this gulf that the priest's housekeeper condescendingly attached herself to the Cadogans. Honor Quin, who had her purpose to serve, lingered behind, and by degrees contrived to place herself beside Marion and to induce the latter to slacken her pace.

Marion scarcely answered the remarks which Miss Quin chose to offer, which were at first commonplace enough. She was walking in a kind of dream; Chichele was beside her in spirit; she felt his hand hold hers; his voice was in her ears. The same sweet incense of the young grass in the meadows was still present as when she was with him in the garden walk. The tribute of the spring was in all the air; from the hedges at either side of the roadway

came the sweet promise of the hawthorn buds; the pale austere primroses that shrunk away among the brown fronds of last year's lady-fern, loosed a timid fragrant message on the night air; the little rivulet seemed to carry it, as it ran babbling and muttering from stone to stone in the deep gully beside the path. She could scarcely believe that he was gone; his very voice was ringing in her ears still; his foot seemed to tread the ground in unison with hers.

Honor Quin ceased talking, and walked along sullenly close behind Marion, brooding how best to make the attack which she meditated. She cherished at that moment the most withering contempt for her, and every now and again she laughed silently to herself, but with the keenest enjoyment, at the prospect of Miss Mauleverer's approaching awakening to a sense of the realities of life as Honor Quin saw them. That elegant young gentleman of hers, what a chance she had of him! A shadow picture of what she divined must be passing through her companion's mind had presented itself to Honor Quin's imagination, a limited though vivid one, and she laughed with such scornful goodwill that she forgot the need for caution and allowed a chuckle to escape her.

Marion turned round. Miss Quin was stooping low, pretending that her shoe hurt her.

'What?' asked Miss Mauleverer, startled down to earth again. 'Did you say anything?'

'No,' returned the other, 'it was nothing. These shoes of mine—worn on them—are new.'

They were drawing near to the osier field now. Kitty Macan was waiting at the gap for her mistresses. A far-off glimmer of a lanthorn betokened her presence. Honor Quin determined to make her move at once.

'What an elegant-looking young gentleman that was Father Conroy brought up.'

Marion's ear caught the ironical tone at once. Her heart began to beat quicker.

'Very different to Allstone, who comes for the fishing every summer. He is a plain business man in London, though!' continued Honor Quin with a vitriolic distinctness.

Allstone was a London tailor, who rented the fishing in the summer season.

'That young gentleman is going to be a lord when his uncle dies—you have heard *dat*, Miss'—a long pause—'Maulever.' Honor Quin was so preoccupied that she lapsed into the vernacular of North Cork. She waited a minute to take breath, then changing her tone to a higher but even more significant one, 'There is nothing but weddings going these times. I suppose Halloweven won't see a girl left in the place but Mary Cadogan and myself.'

She had sent her weapon home, rude and clumsy as it was. Marion's heart seemed to stand still, then to throb violently. She felt her face glow and tingle with anger and indignation. Kitty Macan's lanthorn performed an eccentric dance in the air before her eyes. How she kept her feet she knew not, for her head reeled, but she commanded herself by a strong effort, and offered not a single comment to Honor Quin's audacious insolence. She walked on steadily and quietly; her hands were clenched, and the lips close pressed. Miss Quin, though triumphant, was a little alarmed, and when they reached the heacon Kitty was holding out, she stepped aside as though to keep out of Miss Mauleverer's way. She might have saved herself the trouble, for no notice whatever was taken of her. Gertrude took leave of Father Paul, and started across the field, leaping from stone to stone in the dark with perfect confidence. Marion stroked his sleeve by way of adieu, and without addressing a word or look to Honor Quin, followed her sister somewhat more sedately. Kitty, bringing up the rear with the lanthorn, shambled after them, looking in the darkness like a great awkward glowworm, blind and boggled with its own brilliancy.

Quickly as Gertrude had sped her way over the swampy ground, Marion overtook, distanced, and passed before her into the garden.

'I am not coming to prayers to-night. I am going to my room. Gertrude, tell Aunt Ju for me,' she said, as she ran and vanished in the gloom of the garden. Gertrude, afraid to walk alone among the trees, stood at the

door until Kitty arrived. This she did presently; the candle in the lanthorn was burned out and dying, with hardly a flicker of its light remaining. Kitty was excessively cross at having been kept waiting so long at the gap, and scolded vigorously all the time. She was consumed with curiosity to hear everything about the festivities, and making sure that Marion had hastened on to see her aunt, and give her an account of the evening, and that she was losing all the important details, she scurried over the garden, trampling even across her own bed of cabbages, followed closely by Gertrude, who, as she ran, kept throwing nervous glances over her shoulder and amongst the bushes.

Kitty Macan was disappointed. Marion was not to be seen, but Gertrude gave a brilliant account of everything—chronicled all the guests, or, at all events all their names—she knew no more of them.

‘And, Aunt Ju, that English gentleman, Mr. Ansdale, ah! you know—that handsome, beautiful young man, Mr. Ansdale, who came to see you—he was there.’

Miss D’Arcy was sitting bolt upright in her chair, listening with the keenest interest. ‘He was there! Gertrude, you mistake surely!’ Juliet’s black eyes were wide open with astonishment. ‘Gertrude, you are dreaming, child! Mr. Ansdale, Tighe O’Malley’s guest! Lady Blanche’s cousin at Ahearne’s!’

‘Aunt Ju! I tell you Father Paul brought him. He came with him very late, and he shook hands with me. How could I be mistaken? And there was such a splendid dance! Oh! it was really delightful. Essie Rooney was the girl, and she danced a jig on a door with a policeman. Jury Foote played splendidly. Aunt Ju, it was perfectly beautiful. I must learn to dance a jig!’

‘Oh, gracious!’ exclaimed Kitty Macan; ‘and do you tell me dat Essie Rooney went dere, and she Luke’s old sweetheart, and all—and she marrit to-day at the ten o’clock mass with Tom Moriarity? Well now! you would tink she’d have more pride dan go to Luke’s party, unless maybe she did it to show how little she cared about him. Dat will be it—she had always a great spirit, dat little girl.’

'And do you say that Mr. Ansdale was there? What brought him there?' repeated Miss Juliet. '*Que fait-il dans cette galère?* Hand me the book, Kitty! we must have prayers at once. Is Father Paul coming over here to-morrow, or must he go to Castle Finny? You do not know? Begin now, kneel down, Gertrude. In the name of the——'

Upstairs in the silence and darkness of her own room, like some wounded creature that has retired to suffer unseen, Marion sobbed and cried with a bitterness that was new to her. Honor Quin's detestable speech had worked like an evil charm upon her. The old wound gaped again and stung with a new pang. Honor Quin's voice, the tone and sneer with which it was loaded, had been worse than the words. Marion knew but too well what the wicked malignant creature meant. She was taunting her with her unfortunate position, jibing and making a mock of her, and she was powerless, helpless to defend herself. What answer had she to make? 'And as it was with Honor Quin, so it would be with the whole world,' said Marion, between her sobs, 'there was no hope, no way out of it. And—and, Chichele'—she said his name as he had bade her—'he too would know it, he too would abandon and scorn her.' She threw herself in a passion of grief and anger, face downward on a couch, and the gray light of the May dawn saw her there, exhausted and worn, and filled with the blackest despair.

CHAPTER XXVIII

'As for business, a man may think if he will that two eyes see no more than one, or that a gamester seeth always more than a looker-on; but when all is done the help of good counsel is that which setteth business straight. And if any man think that he will take counsel by pieces, it is well, but he runneth two dangers: one, that he shall not be faithfully counselled, the other, that he shall have counsel given hurtful and unsafe, though with good meaning and mixed partly of mischief and partly of remedy.'

If Judy's loud-mouthed warning had startled the drilling-party, its effect upon another nocturnal gathering in the vicinity had not been a whit less marked.

Sitting huddled together in a ditch were a party of ten men. Jim Cadogan, Tom the shopboy from Quin's, Tony Devoy the labourer, and a few more, represented Barrettstown and its more immediate environs, and prominent among these was Godfrey, though not at the precise moment that Judy's exclamation rent the welkin. He had just then stepped out of the hiding-place occupied by the council, to deliver some message to the American soldier Fenlon, who was drilling the men on the plateau of the mound. It was at that very moment that Chichele had recognised the lad's slender silhouette against the sky.

Every one effaced himself as speedily as might be, but before Chichele and his guide could have proceeded much more than twenty yards downhill, Jim Cadogan, who was lying face down under a heather knoll, became aware of some one pushing his shoulder gently.

'Mr. Cadogan, Mr. Cadogan, sir! It is only the gentle-

man from Tighe O'Malley's dat Judy from above dere is showing down to de road. Dey's gone.'

The speaker, needless to relate, was the musician. His red hair was standing all on end, and his eyes glowed in the dark like those of some wild animal.

'You young devil!' was Jim Cadogan's prompt response, as he sat up and looked around him. 'Why didn't you see them coming, and tell us? What sort of a sentinel are you? Let me hear one more word of that Jew's harp of yours, and I'll fling you and it into the river together. Begone this minute! Whit! whit! whew-ew-ew!' he whistled in imitation of a curlew. Hardly had the sound ceased when the furze thickets and the bushes seemed to move, and the dispersed conclave reassembled as quickly and quietly as it had scattered.

The deliberations of the council were resumed at the very point at which they had been interrupted; the members were indeed well accustomed to these irregularities of procedure.

'The way of it is this,' said a farmer, who seemed to take up the lapsed thread of an argument at the point where it had dropped; 'it is not Marchmont's doings. He's English, the creature, and no bad fellow.'

'But I tell you he is,' burst in Tony Devoy, who had been for some time trying in vain to get a hearing, and who now seized his opportunity, 'Listen to this all of ye! Marchmont came to my cabin 'ere yesterday, and sez he, "How are you thinking to bring up all dose children in dis town—to be beggars like these creatures on de bridge wall, or half starve like yourself and Molly?"—"God is good," said I. "Look here, Devoy," said he. "O'Malley will give you ten pounds to go out of dis doghole of a place, and that English gentleman"—I forget what he called him—"will give you five pounds, for I have spoken to him about you, and I myself will give you five more if you will leave and go to Canada with all dose fine children, and give dem," sez he, "ah chance to live." Now!' Tony Devoy was eagerly watching the reception his recital met with. He had not made up his mind how to deal with the offer, which was in truth a

piece of genuine benevolence on the part of the agent. And was afraid to decide without first asking the approval of the neighbours. Tony felt in his own soul, which was kindly enough, that Marchmont's offer was well intentioned, but with the moral cowardice bred of the hideous social system under which he lived, he did not dare to say yes or no without first seeking a sufficient body of sympathisers to back him up in one or other course.

It was too dark to see the faces of the council, but he strained his ears to catch the first comment. It came after a pause, and from one of his best patrons and friends.

'Twenty pounds !' ejaculated Cadogan.

'Well !' cried Mat, 'and what did you say ?'

'Say !' echoed Tony, who was still feeling his way. 'I swore my soul if he did not lave my place, I'd take my hand to him. Molly, the fool she is, began to cry and run after him, and told him not to mind me ; dat I didn't mane what I sed. Ho ! ho ! ho !' Tony laughed so loudly at this silly idea of his wife's that his next-door neighbour shoved him roughly by way of warning.

'Ay !' sneered Cadogan ; 'I know the whole thing, boys. The English visitor is a member of Parliament, and Tighe O'Malley was shamed by what remarks he passed on the cabins on the estate. Tom Mooney, that helps in the stables, heard the English grooms grinning and jeering over everything, and goin' over all they heard said upstairs, and O'Malley persuading them all it was the people had no taste—"He wouldn't interfere ; if he built a dairy, they'd keep the pig in it."' Here Cadogan mimicked Tighe's voice and manner. 'Did he ever go the length of trying, I wonder ?'

'Ay, ay ! we have no taste,' sneered Mat also, only more bitterly than Cadogan. 'The roof is fit to come down at our place above here. Would Luke or his father renew it to have him raise the rent on us when the lease falls in ? He'd like them to repair the place—we all know that.'

'An' if Tighe an' the rest of them made up twenty pounds for Tony Devoy to get him out of the cabin, they were working their own point in that too. I heard Peter

Quin say Tighe was striving to get rid of paying rates on all the cabins. Old Mauleverer did the same thing—cleared all he could after the famine to save paying rates. He used to pay ten and twenty pounds to a man to go out of the place.' This was from Tom the shopboy.

'Ay, so! but Marchmont was giving five pounds for nothing—for charity, and the strange gentleman too!'

'Charity!' snarled Cadogan, 'charity indeed! Every one has their own point to work when they give charity, and you need think nothing else—to save their own souls if it's the next world they are thinking of, or make off something for themselves if it is this. Charity—pah, that's played out!'

'Played out or not,' observed Tony stolidly, 'could I live, only the neighbours are good? 'Deed, Mr. Cadogan, you don't hold your hand neither when you see a creature bet up wid hunger.' Tony had now made up his mind to refuse the agent's offer.

This was true enough. Bitter-tongued and perverse as Jim Cadogan undoubtedly was, he was like the rest, more generous than just.

'An' now,' pursued Tony, 'I'll get six months' notice to quit, myself an' my long family—oh, wirra! wirra! wirra!' Tony took his head in both hands, and rocked himself to and fro.

'There's more of us that way, I'm thinking,' said the farmer who had spoken before. 'Some one is offering behind me for my place. I'm paying two-fifteen an acre, good and bad, for it, but if Tighe O'Malley can get three pound an acre I'm done.'

'Who is it will give three pound an acre for your farm?' asked a voice in the darkness.

'I don't know—maybe plenty, maybe no one,' was the sullen reply. 'I'll have a life for that place if I have to leave it.' A fearful curse, as malignant of sound as meaning, followed this. As if he had worked himself up to a pitch of fury, the speaker turned next to the Commodore Fenlon and shook him. 'What are you doing for us, taking our money, and drilling and marching and wasting our time! Eh? you Yankee humbug! Am I to be

ruined and lost before the eyes of the world? Ain't I willing to fight? Eh? eh?'

Fenlon resigned himself passively in the grasp of this irate martyr.

'The country ought to rise for your behalf, Daly. I allow *you* have attended drill; but what keeps everything back is this apathy. Luke Ahearne never comes now at all. He is marrying a fortune, has all he wants, and so the rest may go to ruin. Take care it does not come back to him!'

'Begob!' said Mat the faithful. 'Tis easy for you to talk that hasn't your old father and mother depending out of you, and your sisters to get settled out either. I see Luke doin' nothin', only the best he can, and 'tis well enough known 'tis not himself he is plasin'.'

'I grant you all that,' replied the Commodore quietly; 'But I left a good way of living in America and came over here to free this country. What do I find? Only self-seeking and selfishness. Not a farmer hardly supporting the cause—everything left to boys and these labouring men like Devoy here. It is heartbreaking to me. I don't say they are cowards, but they are spiritless, crouching and slaving before agents and landlords instead of rising like free men for their rights. You never will see——'

'Will I shoot O'Malley, eh?' burst in Tony Devoy, jumping to his feet under the influence of the words which his excitement would not allow him to listen longer to. 'Never say it twice, Fenlon! I'll rid the land of him at a word!'

'Stop, Tony! sit down, you fool, you!' ordered Cadogan.

'If the rest had your spirit, man,' resumed the Commodore, 'we'd have seized Limerick by this, overcome the soldiers, and got their arms.'

'Arms!' said a voice from some distance. 'O'Malley has a lot of splendid guns. Why not go for them some night before——'

'Yes, and frighten him—if it was nothing else,' said Mat bitterly. He was thinking of his friend Luke, of his chagrin and disappointments. He held Tighe O'Malley accountable

for it all, and longed to take some revenge or other upon him.

Fenlon thought for a few minutes, then spoke. 'We will do what we said about Lees Castle—attack it early in the night, and as soon as the constabulary have all gone off there, or the bulk of them, pay a call on Barrettsdown, fall in on the back of the house; there is a fine cover of evergreens just below the drawing-rooms.'

'I don't care to go frighten those ladies,' said some one.

'No, begob!' said Tony heartily; he had greeted the Commodore's plan with a whoop of gratification, but he was most chivalrous to the sex, and the mention of the ladies cooled him at once.

'We are not going to hurt the women,' observed Fenlon. 'We will take the guns. If the men resist us they'll take the consequences. You have *orders* now,' he added changing his tone sharply.

'Will it be to-morrow-night, Commodore, eh?'

'Who is asking? Eh? I don't know the voice,' was the reply of the leader.

'Mr. Mauleverer!' answered a couple of voices together.

'I beg your pardon. No, not to-morrow night. I am going to Cork to-morrow to meet the steamer from—from Bristol,' he added, after a hesitating pause. 'I'll send you word—the next change of the moon at latest.'

'Godfrey!' whispered Jim Cadogan. 'Before we go I have just one word to say to you. Make me no answer. Don't pretend you heard me. What is that young gentleman from O'Malley's doing walking with your sister? They were seen in the garden of the Castle. What brought him up here at all! If he is seen with you and your people you'll be suspected! Not a word now. You are warned, that's all.'

Some rustling near hand startled them now, and checked the explosion that rose to Godfrey's lips. It proved to be nothing, but while they were still holding their breaths listening with anxiety, the warning cry of a night owl sounded.

'Whist!' cried Tom the shopboy. 'There's whistles sounding over by the boreen. Whist! whist!'

'Peelers!' called the musician, who had taken his warning to heart. 'Peelers coming up from the town!' He stuck his head over the ditch, and caught Cadogan's collar.

'Join on to the people goin' home from Lambert's Castle,' ordered Fenlon, who had disappeared into and now reappeared out of the darkness suddenly. 'The last of them are going down the boreen. Now, boys, disperse this minute; this way, after me.'

He imitated the cry of a bird in answer, just loud enough for the nearest sentinel to hear and pass on the signal, then took to his heels in advance of his regiment, and reached the cart-track in time to fall in with the loiterers of the Castle Lambert party, with whom they joined themselves, and passed the patrol without question. All save one.

Godfrey remained behind lying quietly in the dry ditch until the rustle and trampling had died away and not a sound broke the stillness of the air. Then he jumped up, and turning his face round towards the town set off rapidly across the bog. Even in the dark he knew the ground. His practised feet found the right tufts of sedge, knew where the stones were, even when nearly covered with the black bog water. By many a treacherous pit, through many a slimy morass, Godfrey's humour conducted him until he reached a sloping part of the ground, where he stood for a moment irresolute. He took off his cap, and let the pure cool air play on his feverish face, and lift the crisp wet curls of his hair. The moon had set, and the stars shone clear overhead. Not a light betrayed the existence of Barrettstown, which lay near enough now. The woods of the demesne formed a black silent mass beyond it. Even the revellers were sleeping; not a dog's bark broke the stillness; not as much as the chirp of some dreaming wild bird broke the nocturnal silence of the bog.

Godfrey knew exactly the path to take, for the high-road lay straight below him now. He had only to cross it, and the gap and the osier field led him straight into the Quaker's house. But he also knew of another path leading to a place of infinitely greater attractions to him. For nearly a quarter of an hour he stood bareheaded under the stars,

deliberating, musing ; then he turned his back towards home, and struck straight into the opposite direction. He left the low ground, and crossed the hill, descended the other side, and following a stony track in the heather, found himself ere long in front of a ruined abandoned cabin. Half the roof had fallen in, and only one wall was intact : there was no difficulty of ingress. Godfrey stepped over a heap of stones, and struck a match against a dry portion of the wall. Then he lighted a candle, which he drew from a hiding-place familiar to himself, and then sat down on a kind of semi-couch formed of heather branches. After a minute or two he stretched out his long limbs, tossed back his hat, and folded both arms behind his head.

At that moment a creeping silent figure glided up to the wall of the ruined cabin, and crouching on all fours drew near, noiselessly, breathlessly, to the broken wall. It was the same man who had followed Fenlon and his regiment and the Council of Ten to the breen, but who had hidden among the bushes, and returned to dog Godfrey Mauleverer across the bog home. Godfrey had given him a long tramp, but he was now to have his reward.

After a rest of not more than a quarter of an hour, the spy, lying on the ground outside, saw the boy sit up, and move a stone in the wall beside the heather bed. He put his hand into the hole, and drew out a bundle wrapped up in a cloth. This contained letters, papers of various sorts, and a little bag. He watched every movement jealously ; noted the manner in which it was wrapped, the order of its contents, watched every one as it was laid down after perusal. Godfrey read for a few minutes only ; then he took out a pencil, made some entries to the little book—hieroglyphs apparently. Then he folded up and replaced the bundle, looked at his watch, lay for a few minutes at full length again on the heather, and finally blew out the candle, thrust it back in its hiding-place, and striding out of his strange hermitage turned his face towards home, taking the same path which he had come by.

There was no need to follow him now. The spy entered the cabin boldly, struck a light in his turn—only waiting

until such time as Godfrey should have passed over the top of the hill, lighted a candle, and lying down exactly as he had seen Godfrey do on the heap of old dry heather, removed the stone, and taking out the bundle, began to inspect its contents at his leisure. He took out a book of his own presently, and copied carefully certain entries from that of Godfrey. Then he folded everything up as he had found it, replaced the parcel in the hole behind the loose stone, and in turn took his way home in the gray early dawn, with the happy certainty of having accomplished a lucrative piece of work. The night had turned; it was near morning. Long yellowish streaks high up in the sky marked where the sun's far-reaching fingers had begun the day's work. Not a sign of red on the horizon yet—a pale uniform gray, and every star had vanished. Godfrey, worn with late vigils and excitement, unwillingly recognising the near advent of the day, drew the shutters of his window close, and pulling the bedclothes over his head, fell into a deep sleep of exhaustion.

CHAPTER XXIX

'Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy ;
Or, in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear.'

THERE was an unusually large party assembled at Barretts-town at breakfast the next morning. The neighbours had stayed all night. Chichele was the last to come down ; his sister had been the first, and had, to her delight, seen a telegram on his plate, which had come with the early post-bag. Tighe O'Malley had scarcely finished distributing the contents of a huge leather bag, when Mrs. Courthope appeared, and barely waiting to say good morning to him, ran round the table.

'Are you looking for your place, Ida ? You are there—you have not been changed,' he called across the table to her, 'and you have a couple of telegrams.'

She had seen her brother's plate. There was one telegram—she recognised the colour—perhaps more upon it. So she retraced her steps and took her own place. It might or might not be in time, she mused sadly, but she would never forgive Mr. Sheriff for his inconsiderateness and procrastination. She opened her own telegraph envelope. Just as she expected, it contained a most commonplace excuse. 'Regret to say your telegram was received after office hours on Saturday. Have obeyed your instructions without loss of time.'

'Exactly twenty words,' murmured Mrs. Courthope, counting them; 'but he will charge Heaven knows what in the bill. I shall be anxious to know how Chichele takes his.' She determined to watch him, and if she dared, to ask a question.

Just then everybody came in at once, and it was with great difficulty that she managed to abstract her attention from the guests so as to see his reception of his news. Nor was she destined to derive much satisfaction or illumination from her scrutiny. There were two telegrams on his plate. The first which he opened announced a mishap to one of his horses serious enough to warrant the grooms telegraphing for instructions to destroy the animal. The second was the family lawyer's inspired missive.

'If possible come to town to-morrow to meet Ramsden here at three; case may be heard this term, otherwise postponement to Trinity Sittings.'

Chichele murmured something which was not exactly a blessing, as did a Lincolnshire gentleman named Ramsden, who was in the suit with him, and who received a similar communication much about the same time of day. He crammed the telegrams into his pocket, and began to read his letters with a preoccupied look.

'I hope you have no unpleasant news,' said Lady Blanche, whose sympathy was attracted by his harassed face.

'I have indeed!' he replied, handing her the telegram from the groom.

'Oh, poor animal!' she shuddered. 'You will telegraph at once, won't you, and have him put out of pain?'

There was some one else in pain besides the horse, and that was Mrs. Courthope. She stretched out her hand eagerly for the form, the perusal of which in no way tended to comfort her.

Nothing could be more unsatisfactory. If he intended to act upon the telegram from Mr. Sheriff he ought at once to speak to his host and hostess, and make known to them that he was about to leave immediately. There was a drive across country of eight miles to catch the mail up

train, which was due at the junction at about three o'clock. She looked at her brother with a face at once expectant and reproaching. Then she recollected all at once that in the ordinary course of events she was not expected to know anything about the matter which was uppermost in her mind, so she bent her head in some confusion over her plate.

Chichele's thoughts were not pleasant ones either. He must go. The question of the settled estate—Newtsmere in Lincolnshire—must be decided as soon as possible. His uncle Lord Ansdale was interested in it as well as himself. Trinity Sittings came in June, the height of the season, when he in all probability would be otherwise engaged. It must be done: he must go, but he would not, he could not go unless he saw Marion once more. They had agreed to meet in the afternoon. He cursed the folly of postponing the interview—had he only said eleven—twelve in the forenoon! He pretended to eat the food on his plate, but as he cut it up he rapidly planned a scheme. His man Todd would get everything packed, he would make some pretext or other—letters to write—slip out quietly, gallop down to the side door that lay opposite the stables across the deer park. The horse could be tied up to the gate of the Quaker's house. Nothing easier—and he would take a cunning note with him to send in by the servant. Then would—a deep sigh ended his reverie. His opposite neighbour, Miss La Poer observed this, and smiled.

'Very unsympathetic and unkind of you!' he said to her, rousing himself with an effort. 'If you only knew what the trouble is!'

'What? Pray tell us!' she replied.

Chichele gave it to be understood by a melodramatic grimace that his griefs were too deep for words, nor could his *vis-à-vis* extract any information from him. He waited until breakfast was over, then followed Lady Blanche on her way to her morning-room.

'My dear coz,' he said, stopping her on the threshold of the room, 'just look at this, will you, please?' He

handed her the despatch of the man of business, and leaned against the wall as she read it.

'You see, I must depart. I suppose I may have a trap at the proper time?'

'You *must* go—you—are sure.'

'Necessity is laid upon me. You see that Ramsden has unearthed himself for this *rendezvous*.'

'I am so sorry, dear. Ida will be quite put out that you don't return with them.'

'Oh, as to that, I am of course also; but it is only a question of a few days now. I am so sorry to go.'

'It is so sweet of you to say that.'

'You cannot imagine how I hate to go just now.'

She was struck by the feeling in his tone, and raised her brows a little. He was leaning against the panelled wall, his eyes fixed with a far-off look on the green sweep of the turf that spread below a little window in the wall of the passage. The ivy set it all round in a green frame, and shaded the light that fell upon his troubled face. They were very beautiful eyes, very large, long shaped, and with a dark circle below each that spoke of late vigils. He had not slept but for a few hours after dawn, and this summons to London, which was not to be evaded, had depressed him strangely.

Lady Blanche noted the down-drawn corners of his mouth. The handsomely-marked curve of his short upper lip seemed all the more conspicuous; the long curled lashes of his eyes showed against the pallor of his smooth young face.

'Chick, dear boy,' she said timidly, 'you have no worse trouble?' She looked at him interrogatively—kindness shone transparent in her gentle voice, in the expression of her eyes. 'It is nothing more than going away,' she added.

'No!' He was startled a little, and somewhat touched. 'It is absolutely nothing more—it is a hideous bore!' He took one of her hands, kissed it by way of closing the interview, and stepped lightly into the morning-room, as if to open and hold the door for her.

'Ida, here is a telegram from that preposterous person. I must go to-day, at once. It is most provoking! I shall

be busy. I have so many letters to write, and mean to spend the whole forenoon in, er—Miss La Poer, I am ordered off at once—a fact—yes—my sister will explain it all to you.'

'*My sister will explain it all to you,*' repeated that personage to herself, entering the morning-room just in time to catch the concluding sentence of his speech. She flushed up to the roots of her hair. Could he suspect? It was quite impossible! She moved for a moment into one of the bay windows to recover her equanimity. When she turned round again her brother was gone, and Miss La Poer was left lamenting. Lady Blanche possessed the key of the enigma, the telegram, and to her and it they all addressed themselves.

'I have half a mind to confide in Blanche,' said Chichele to himself as he ascended the stairs by leaps and bounds. 'She is one of those really amiable souls—one could trust her heart—I hate women with heads—and a good woman into the bargain.' He met his valet at that moment descending the stairs with an armful of clothes.

'Todd, you must be ready to leave by one. I am crossing to London this evening. I say, carry back these things to my room just now.'

The man backed and turned, his master following. They reached the room, the door of which Chichele closed.

'I want a horse, that roan. I want a couple of hours'—er—gallop this morning at once.' He was putting off his boots as he spoke. 'Go down to the stables and get him saddled, and lead him outside at the back—you know, where he was the other night.'

'Yes, sir! Mr. O'Malley has ordered the roan for himself to ride with Lord Fredbury to the sessions at the Court House of Kildysart.'

'What else can I have? Todd, you *must* get me something that can go. Just be off down and see. Give Ballow a sov.'

'Yes, sir! I daresay I can manage it.' In ten minutes, which time his master occupied in writing a letter which he sealed carefully, and put in his breast pocket, he returned

to say that a fast pony was being saddled, and would be waiting outside the paddock wall in a minute or two.

Something less than a minute or two saw Chichele booted and spurred, and stamping with impatience on the ground as he waited in the appointed place for his steed. He knew that he must catch Marion before eleven, at which hour she was due for her Italian lesson at the convent. There was a chance of meeting her on the road, or in the village. It was close upon the quarter hour by the stable clock. Indeed before the pony reached the side gate the clear metallic notes overtook him, carried along fitfully by the west wind.

The mud was something to be astonished at. A part of the road by the river lay hid below a sheet of what looked like silver. It had been raining all night long, and now heavy gray wool-pack clouds were rolling off eastwards like a veil that was being drawn by a hidden hand, uncovering in its progress a whole landscape quivering into beauty and light. In the shade the river ran deep red from the water of the bogs, in the open with a white glow like that of quicksilver. The dead flags and bulrushes swayed with the hurried pulse of the Barrettwater as it made haste down to the sea, the coltsfoot on the banks, whose young leaves were just opened like white glistening velvet, rose gradually out of the flood, and behind this spread itself the pale emerald of the grass, broken here and there by the skeleton of a last year's field flower lifting its brown wraith, like a *memento mori*, among all the heedless youth of the year. The apple blossom of the Quaker's garden, towards which Chichele turned his longing eyes, was now indistinct and formless like some pale rose cloud. The tall old pear-trees had shed their bloom, and turned a livid rain-soaked green, here and there stained as if with yellow.

He rode furiously through the wet ground and the dry alike, never swerving nor regarding, his eyes straining peevishly to catch sight of Marion. The river path was not under water. It was higher than the Barrettstown side, and lay shining and clear in the sunlight: not a creature, not a dog, was upon it. He clattered down the street,

seeing not one of the hats that were lifted to him, looked up the Dublin Road, which led to the convent, turned suddenly and swept across the bridge. He rode on until he was abreast of the path through the marsh. All was silent and deserted. He turned, feeling almost despairing, and betook himself back towards the bridge.

Once in sight of it he plucked up his courage and made a desperate resolve—to assail the Quaker's house and face Miss D'Arcy, try his luck at the hall door. Time pressed—it was just the half-hour. He beckoned to a group of ragged children standing by the bridge, and hastened along the river path. He jumped off on reaching the ivy-covered gate, and turned to look if the group to whom he had signalled had despatched one of their number to mind the pony.

To his surprise one of them, a red-haired, most dilapidated-looking child of about twelve, was close behind, panting, and covered with fresh mud, some from the pony's heels, some from his own. The pale face and wild brown eyes had a familiar look. Chichele gazed hard at him for an instant; then he recognised the musician of the furze bush, whose martial strains had inspired the rebels when performing their military evolutions the night before. Despite his preoccupations and anxiety, which were considerable, the sheer drollery of the idea made him take an uncontrollable fit of laughter. He remembered his headlong career through a frightful moss, the ghostly silent figures like some phantom army seen but too clearly against the sky, the alarm note sounded by his guide, a young Megæra with witch locks curled round and round her head, who took off her shoes when they came to the watery part of the bog. And the musician whom they had disturbed from his post! This was he.

The child's keen eyes never stirred from Chichele's face, and seemed as if they read his inmost thoughts.

'Listen,' Chichele said, as he took the bridle obediently. 'I am going to the door of that house. When you hear me whistle, lead the pony in after me, you hear, and on no account take him outside before I come out.'

The boy nodded, and Chichele with a beating heart passed under the ivy-hung gate, and made his way through the dripping laurels to the hall door.

This, to his relief, stood hospitably open. He had pictured to himself a colloquy with one of the servant-women through a chink. There was no one in the hall. What if they were all out! The open door might have that significance in this land of anomalies. How intolerably close it had become! The air was all warm steam. He lifted his 'deer-stalker' cap and ran his ungloved hand through the crisp damp curls on his forehead. After an instant's pause he raised his whip and struck with the gold handle a pretty sonorous summons on the panel of the door.

The success of this was almost instantaneous. The whip had scarcely dropped to its former level when Kitty Macan's face showed frowning at the sitting-room door. She blinked at him from below her frills like some nocturnal bird that had been forced from its sombre retreat into the sunlight.

'Is Miss Mauleverer at home?' he asked.

Kitty Macan's answer was to shut the sitting-room door and advance cautiously and silently to peer in his face.

Chichele repeated the words.

'Miss Marion?' questioned Kitty by way of reply, staring at him as if she did not think he knew what he was saying.

'Yes, Miss Marion—Miss Mauleverer. Is she at home?'

'Well, then! she is,' replied Kitty, with a tone and manner which plainly conveyed 'What then? what if she is?'

He stared at her, dumbfounded at this most unexpected attitude. Her wrinkled, crabbed face had assumed an expression of blank inquiry, mingled with wonderment and distrust.

'Frightful old witch!' thought he; then aloud and pleadingly, 'could I see her for a moment?'

'Kitty, Kitty Macan!' sounded from the inner room. It was Miss D'Arcy's voice.

'Yerra, child!' snapped the janitress, proceeding to

move the door forward, 'how do I—ah, go home!' but the word died on her lips at the sight of a coin which the visitor most opportunely displayed.

'Musha, then, your honour!' exclaimed Kitty, with a queer change of tone and manner; 'wait a bit, honey jewel, till I see what herself is wantin'.' She darted into the sitting-room and shut the door. Chichele stamped with impatience, and took out his watch, staring at the dial without seeing it. He could hear the pony fidgeting about on the wet gravel behind the laurel-trees. A crow flew overhead with a loud croak. The house cat appeared at the end of the passage, and seeing the stranger, stood still and stared, and then withdrew discreetly. It seemed an eternity.

He was about to apply the whip handle once more to the door panel, when the sitting-room door opened, and Kitty Macan appeared once more. Holding one hand discreetly before her mouth, she approached him again.

'I am in an awful hurry, I say. *Can* I see Miss Marion?' Kitty gave him a curious look.

'Step in—go in dere.' A push indicated a door on the opposite side of the hall. He opened this and entered, while Kitty Macan, holding something clutched tight in her hand, ascended the stairs.

The room in which Chichele found himself, save for a big old painted press, was destitute of furniture of any description. A ruinous old bath-chair was laid away against the wall. A saddle that had evidently not been used for a long time was lying on the hearth-stone. The low window sill was deep enough for a seat, and he let himself drop into it, straining his ears for a sound. He could hear the creaking deliberate tick of the big old clock in the passage. He fancied that he could hear between the ticks Miss D'Arcy's laboured breathing from the other room. The faintest sound seemed loud and startling; the ticking of the clock, preternaturally slow, grew more distinct every moment. He jumped up at last.

'I shall lose the train,' he groaned. 'I cannot go!' He flung himself into the window-seat again, feeling almost faint with anxiety and suspense.

At that instant the door opened, but it was not the old woman; it was Godfrey who stood there before his astonished eyes, Godfrey with his hair all tossed, his cheeks burning crimson, and his eyes haggard and clouded like those of one in a fever. He had no waistcoat on, and his shirt was open at the throat. He had advanced almost into the room when his eyes fell on Chichele, who, astonished beyond measure, was almost in the act of speaking. Godfrey leaped like some guilty creature, then in the same instant backed out and clapped to the door without a word.

Chichele remained still for an instant, scarcely breathing. Then he rushed to the door.

'Mauleverer!' he cried, 'Mauleverer, I say!' but the wind carried his voice away down the empty passages. Not one word came back in reply. Godfrey had vanished utterly.

He was thinking about this strange proceeding, and trying to realise what it might mean, when Kitty Macan reappeared coming down the stairs with a very important air, and holding something in her apron.

'Dere!' she said, presenting him with a twisted bit of paper; 'dere now, my dear young gentleman, and don't be coming here again. O Lord! For God's sake don't be coming here. Dis is no house for de likes of you. Oh no! my beautiful young gentleman, no place for you. You has no call with dese Maulevers. Ah, dear God! Run home, my lovely young gentleman! De blessin' of the Lord follow you is my prayers dis night—run!'

He was paying her but scant attention. The paper was untwisted, its solitary page all spread out before his astonished eyes.

'I cannot come down—I must not. Do not come here any more. Do not write, or ask to see me. I cannot tell you the reason. We must not meet any more.
M. M.'

'Dis is no place for de likes of you, sir, I say.' Kitty's eyes were fixed on his with a threatening defiant look, and as she spoke she held the door open.

‘What does this mean?’ questioned Chichele. ‘What are you?—go and ask Mr. Mauleverer to come here for a moment—go!’ almost vociferated Chichele.

‘No, den!’ answered Kitty truculently. ‘I will not, and he would not come if I did. Go your way, my dear young gentleman, dis is no house for you or de likes of you. What has you to do wit’ de Mauleverers? Oh! for God’s sake, go! honey; my dear, go, dis minute now!’

Chichele obeyed her like one in a dream; holding Marion’s note clenched in his fingers he descended the steps, pushed his way through the laurels, and was gone immediately from her vision.

CHAPTER XXX

‘I know them, yea !
And what they weigh,
Even to the utmost scruple ;
How they might hurt their enemies if they durst ;
And this is all . . .’

WHILE Chichele’s thoughts were engaged in storming the enchanted castle on the farther shore of the Barrettwater, Tighe O’Malley, his guest Courthope, and Lord Fredbury, were in the library holding an animated discourse together.

‘You, of course, have custom on your side,’ said Courthope. ‘I grant all that, but I must say I cannot see any chance of improvement so long as these customs obtain here.’

‘Now, Fredbury,’ exclaimed Tighe, appealing to his neighbour, ‘I ask you, Is there any use attempting to make an Englishman understand this country? Over and over I have told him that if we built pigsties for these people, they’d let lodgings in the house and go and live in the pigsty. Bartle de Vere gave a kitchen-range to one of his farmers’ wives, and found she put the turkey to hatch in the oven. As for dairies, it’s all stuff. Some of the people keep the milk in the same room that they sleep in—I might say nearly all the small people do. If I built dairies they would continue to do so. They don’t know of any better or more civilised way of living, and they don’t want to be different from their fathers and mothers before them or their neighbours round about them.’

Tighe spoke almost angrily. He had observed Courthope's disapproval of many things said by himself in elucidation of the Irish problem, and put this down to Saxon incapacity. He had latterly begun to suspect something more than congenital stupidity on his guest's part. 'Just like them,' said Tighe to himself angrily. 'Want all the world shaped to their pattern. No wonder this country is in the state it is, when it is governed by the like of Jack Courthope, turning up their noses at everything, and expecting us to be English and Irish at the same time.'

'There is certainly need of example,' observed Courthope drily.

Lord Fredbury glanced at him. He too resented being lectured; but as well as an Irish landlord, he was an English landowner, which Tighe O'Malley was not.

'Land of your own, eh?' he asked.

'Er, yes—place in Cornwall,' returned the M.P.

He was thinking how glad he was that his property lay in the South of England, and not in the South of Ireland, and he thought of Tighe's queer ways, his handing out money to the beggars—even their goodwill he found it necessary to purchase—his assumption of an Irish brogue when speaking to any of his tenants or dependants. In his way, O'Malley appeared to be quite as much afraid of them as they were of him. Extraordinary country, extraordinary people, and abominable system!

'It's rubbish to talk of improving these people until they make up their minds to be improved.' Lord Fredbury was the speaker. 'They resent everything and distrust everything that is done for them. My Berkshire tenants are never done crying out to me to improve their houses—improve their land. I lend them steam-ploughs, often send them presents of stock, of manure. Here they seem to be afraid equally of your friendship and your enmity.'

'Do you ascribe this to the action of the priests?'

'I should be sorry to make that statement,' replied Lord Fredbury after a pause.

Courthope looked at O'Malley expectantly. Had Lord Fredbury replied that he did ascribe the unaccountable

attitude of the Irish to the advice of their clergy, Tighe would have corroborated him heartily and instantly. Seeing, however, that an individual opinion was expected from him, he became timid, as usual. Tighe would face a battery of artillery, and never hesitate as to consequences, but he was a Celt to the backbone, and the habit of pleasing people was ingrained in him. His hesitation was plainly manifested.

'I—er—I—I must say I think they have an extraordinary hold on the people, but they discountenance Fenianism—oh, most certainly!'

'That's no answer at all!' said Courthope bluntly. He felt angry, remembering how Tighe had swaggered to him about having given wood for the roof of the new chapel, and a site in the demesne. If he disapproved of the priests why did he do that? It was like buying the goodwill of the beggars. He got up and walked over to the window. 'I don't care how soon I go home,' he murmured to himself; 'and I never will set foot in this open Pandora's box of a country while I am alive. Never felt well since I came, either; some of the evils have got in my shoulder-blade.' He twisted himself rather viciously. 'Either the priests support the people, or they don't,' he added, turning round.

'They may not support them in Fenianism,' said Lord Fredbury, 'but it's my opinion that they don't care to see the people improving.'

'In that the priests might very well reply,' Tighe said, 'that spiritual not temporal matters are their care. They leave temporal affairs to us.'

Courthope said nothing. He was trying to recollect something said to him a few days before which contradicted this last statement of Tighe's. He could recall only the impression left by the words, not the words themselves, so he remained silent.

'Where do you draw the boundary line? That's the question. If these people,'—Lord Fredbury raised his voice—'choose to bid up the rents of their own farms, one against the other, are we to refuse their money? I candidly confess I have often refused a tenant's offer, and given the preference to a man who bid less, because I thought the

one was simply wasting his capital, and would never give the land its due in the way of stock and manure, etc.'

Tighe looked admiringly at the speaker; he himself could not boast of such a supreme height of self-sacrifice as that. Courthope's face expressed interested attention—inwardly he was thinking to himself that a more naïve admission of selfishness he had hardly heard. After a pause he spoke.

'You evidently admit that the tenants are not the best judges of their own interests.'

'How could they be?' Tighe exploded. 'Most ignorant people in the world! You could not get them to breed decent animals, no matter what rounds you went to. They know nothing on earth of anything—least of all of farming—and won't learn.'

'Won't learn?' echoed Courthope.

'They will not. There are schools provided by the Government for them, all to no purpose.'

'Hah!' said Lord Fredbury, 'there's where their priests come in. They disapprove of the State schools.'

'Do the priests then provide schools in lieu of them?'

'No—except some primary schools, and these seminaries for the education of young priests and laymen. We can't interfere, and don't, in these matters. They will not be helped by us, and they don't help themselves.'

'It is incomprehensible—utterly!'

'Well,' said Lord Fredbury, 'I was lately in Cumberland, and was crossing from—I forget the places. A man—very shrewd, well-informed fellow—sitting beside me on the coach told me he did business in Ireland every year, had spent months here every year for twenty years, and he understood the country rather less than when he began. I told him I had been born and brought up in Ireland, and very rarely left it, and that I did not understand it at all, and never expected to.'

Courthope offered no remark to this. He felt it was hopeless to pursue the subject further. He felt angry as well as despondent, half thinking that both were mystifying him, yet unwilling to doubt their *bona fides*. So after a

minute or two he left the room to get ready some matters for the post-bag.

Tighe and Lord Fredbury, as soon as the door had closed on the bewildered Courthope, did not exchange a grin like the augurs of old, though there was to the full as much of an understanding between them. Tighe threw a glance of pity and deprecation after the retreating figure of the member of Parliament, and then looked at Lord Fredbury with a semi-apologetic air.

'They're hopeless! Nothing on earth will convince them that this isn't a border county of England, or one of the shires. Courthope in London is one of the nicest, pleasantest fellows you could wish to meet, but he took it into his head that he wanted to understand Ireland—God help him!—and ever since he came over here with us——' An expressive shrug finished the sentence most eloquently.

'Regular tourist, eh? poking their noses into everything! Hope he isn't going to write a book, and serve us all up in *sauce piquante*.'

'Oh, not he, poor fellow! last thing he'd ever think of.'

There was a pause for a few minutes, then Tighe, who was evidently smarting, resumed:

'Englishmen are very irritating out of their own country, most of all when they come here. I vow and declare nothing will teach them till we treat them like the Danes of old—nail a few of their skins to the mast of the Irish mail-boat, by way of warning to the others.'

A note was put into his hands at that instant. 'That Lethbridge again!' he muttered, running his eye over it. 'We ought to be on our way to Sessions. I fear I must go and see Lethbridge first. Will you go on? I'll follow as soon as I can. The dog-cart will come back for you, if not, you can have the gig. I'll run down to the barracks in a trice.'

The dog-cart was at the door, and in a minute Tighe was driving rapidly in the direction of the barracks. Just as he turned out of the gates he met Chichele riding hard. He half pulled up.

'You are off to-day, Blanche says,' he cried. 'My dear

boy, so sorry to lose you! I really am sorry he's going,' he thought to himself. 'If they were all like him one wouldn't want to nail their skins on the packet-boats. Nice, gentlemanly, poor chap!' At this moment the pony was turned round and made to draw up to the side of the dog-cart. Chichele was holding out his hand to Tighe.

'Good-bye, old fellow! You can't fancy how sorry I am to go.'

There was something in the tone of this that struck Tighe—he could not tell how or why.

'Come back, then! Get done the work and come back. I hope it's nothing bothering. You're looking vexed.'

Chichele shook his head. He was very pale, and his eyes had a worn anxious look. The pony started and plunged.

'If not now, whenever you care to—delighted to see you—room always ready—Blanche only too pleased to see you.' Tighe had to bawl this last, for the pony saw the gate open, and seemed anxious to relieve the gate-woman of the trouble of holding it. Chichele waved his thanks, and the dog-cart went on.

'Hope he is in no money scrapes,' mused Tighe. 'Frightful job when a youngster runs his neck in that collar. Now for this truly infernal Jack in office.'

He was now reining up at the door of the barracks. A policeman sprang to the horse's head, saluting as he did so. A great many people went into their houses. Jim Cadogan came out of his mother's shop and scowled at O'Malley. It was about twelve, and he had just risen, but not yet made his toilette. He leaned against the door-jamb and watched Tighe's dog-cart as if he could glean some information from it.

The sub-inspector Lethbridge, who had sent up a special messenger to Barrettstown to ask Tighe to come down at once, was sitting in his private room.

'Good morning!' he said, rising and holding out his hand.

Tighe shook the proffered hand rather coldly. He

noticed a kind of swollenness about the constabulary officer's manner, and put on his critical snubbing air.

'Morning, Lethbridge! Well, what's up now? Is it a haystack overheated again, or have you another "rising" coming off the very night Lady Blanche has people coming to dinner?'

'Something nearer home still,' answered the officer, a little nettled. 'Would you mind sitting down here? Yes, that's it now; and here you have——' he lowered his voice so that Tighe could barely catch the words—'the report of the man who was out with the boys last night. Read that for yourself.'

O'Malley took the report with the air of a martyr performing his duty for duty's sake and with great condescension to unworthy trifles, and began to read it partly to himself, partly mumbling it audibly.

Lethbridge watched his face. He was thoroughly irritated by O'Malley's attitude, but bided his time. Presently he saw a black scowl overspread the rubicund jolly countenance of the squire of Barretts town.

'By Jove!' he said; 'a raid on the house! My wife is too delicate to stand that—whew! No time to lose either.'

'It won't be to-night, so you need not hurry. I expect a good half-dozen false alarms first. This is an important step, you see, and might lead to a proclamation of martial law.'

Tighe did not reply. After a few minutes he said, 'The daring of this! The barracks within signal almost—visitors in the house, too—three men—half-a-dozen servant-men!!—all of us armed! Lethbridge, I believe it is all a hoax!'

'Look here!' said the sub-inspector. 'Have you any idea that anybody wants *you* out of the way—shot, I mean? Eh? Has any one in this place any motive in especial for attacking you—trying to kill you—eh?'

'No, certainly not!'

'Ha, well! you have not read the list of names in that report. Have you observed in whose hands the Fenian

prayer-book and memorandum papers were found last night ?'

'Godfrey Mauleverer ! By Jove ! that's a young beginner ! I say, this is very unpleasant !'

'I must tell you,' said Lethbridge, 'that it is matter of public belief here in the town that if you were—out of the way, you know—Godfrey Mauleverer would take everything.'

'What ? that he would get Barrettstown ? They all know he is a bastard. Oh, come, Lethbridge, *that's* rubbish !'

'Yes, I know all about that. The fact remains as I tell you. They are ignorant enough for anything, and it is an additional element of danger for you.'

'Whew !' whistled Tighe, getting up and smoking very hard, 'whew !'

There was a considerable pause.

'Of course we could lock him up for this, or half of it,' remarked the officer.

'Pho-! stuff ! not at all !' hastily answered Tighe. 'If they want my scalp that won't keep it for me. Besides, you know, I don't want the poor young fool harmed. I must really see about that whole business—have neglected it too long altogether. Marchmont was right enough. I must get them out of this place altogether.'

'Mind you, O'Malley,' said the sub-inspector, 'the boy knows nothing of his friends' intentions in his behalf. In fact, that part of the business is mere rumour that has come to me. They all know perfectly well that he has no claims to the estate, but they expect the sky to fall when the Fenians are triumphant, and to be able to do what they choose, and they will choose to put him in Barrettstown Castle, and think they will. You are a mere detail to be shelved by the way.'

'Just so ! And any zealous friend of his may pick me off at any minute—in his interests, if not in those of the cause. Pleasant look-out ! Tell me, did your fellows carry off all his papers after they tracked him to the gauger's hut ?'

'Oh no ! disturbed nothing ! Killett copied everything of any importance.'

'Well, if you had carried off his precious museum, it would have given the young fool a wholesome fright. Eh? think so?'

'No! Better wait until we get some more into our hands. You see, I get more "information" than I want, but that list of names in a known handwriting is worth all the talk put together.'

'That's your look-out completely; but if we don't interfere just now, as you advise, my house is to be attacked, and I am to be shot, with a view to clearing the road to my estate for this young sportsman.'

'Have a guard—get five or six constables. I've advised you often enough.'

Tighe answered by a grimace, and leaning against the mantelpiece, kicked the fender with his boot-heel. A guard! after all his boasting to Courthope of the happy relations between his people and himself, and the complimentary comparisons to be inferentially drawn between his neighbours' affairs and those of Barrettstown. It was intolerable! Brown of Lees Castle, a *parvenu*, who had came into the county only a few years, had four policemen and a barrack on his ground, but that Tighe O'Malley of Barrettstown, one of the stock county set, should be reduced to any such position! It was a stinging thought! He exploded at last—'I won't bother with a guard. No, I could not stand it, Lethbridge! I shall run up to Dublin, and see Miniver' (the duke who was then viceroy). 'There are a great many considerations. I cannot allow this plot to come to a head. You see, family considerations and that sort of thing are involved. It would never do to have that poor boy publicly disgraced and exposed, especially as you tell me he is left in the dark as to this design on my life. No! no! Better to leave, to go away until the autumn. I must remove Lady Blanche at once. If you'll telegraph to me as soon as they settle the date of the attack I'll come back to receive them. I'll go up this very day and see the Duke.'

'His Excellency won't be able to do more for you than I suggest,' observed the sub-inspector.

'This is an exceptional, quite exceptional case,' returned Tighe loftily.

Lethbridge was well accustomed to these exceptional cases, which were indeed the rule, according to his experience. He said no more, and Tighe O'Malley mounted his dog-cart and returned at full speed whence he had come.

He had not been long out of the town when his agent Captain Marchmont entered the barracks in quest of the sub-inspector.

'O'Malley has just gone,' said this last. 'I fancied, perhaps, that you heard he was here, and wanted to see him.'

'I do not,' answered the agent. 'Why do you not persuade him to have a guard? There has been work carried on above our place that makes one feel uneasy for him.'

Lethbridge shrugged his shoulders.

'I have been trying to impress him with not only the fact that he is in general danger and has been for some time, but that he is actually a marked man. Only since last night to be sure, but—look at this.'

Captain Marchmont read the papers handed to him and laid them down with a grave face.

'That unhappy boy mixed up in this! It is really too bad, and now, I suppose, the case is hopeless. I don't like interfering, but I begged O'Malley over and over to do something for those poor people.'

'But he did! He offered to educate the boy. I really think he did all in his power.'

'Well! as I was the person employed to communicate his offer to Father Conroy, and through him to the Mauleverers' aunt and guardian, I ought to know exactly how matters stand. Our friend offered to educate the boy, *as a Protestant*. His offer was coupled with that, to my mind, prohibitory restriction.'

'Quite right too—perfectly right! The idiots refused!' Lethbridge spoke with the true spirit of Irish Evangelicalism.

'Naturally Miss D'Arcy and Father Conroy treated the

offer as a deliberate insult—just as in their place I should have done,' remarked Captain Marchmont.

Lethbridge stared. 'Why, you don't mean that O'Malley ought to have done anything else?'

'Far be it from me to dictate to O'Malley. O'Malley and you are two upholders of the English Government in this country—a comment of mine as a mere Englishman would be an impertinence. Besides, you have means'—he nodded to the table where the spy's reports lay—'of informing yourselves of what is going on that I do not possess—and would be devilish sorry to use,' he added.

'Quite so!' answered the sub-inspector. 'I have always found it so with your country-people. They don't understand the people here at all; no matter how long—you'll excuse my saying so—an Englishman may live in this country, he never can learn how to deal with these people. The Irish are very curious—they're not a bit like any other people in the world.'

'You are a Galway man?' questioned Captain Marchmont in a restrained, curious tone.

'No; Roscommon. My father was a clergyman in Roscommon.'

'Humph! What do you mean to do about young Mauleverer?'

'Oh, I can lock him up any minute!'

'Throw him into jail! into a common jail!'

'Yes, of course! and I really think that O'Malley seems not to like the idea; it would be the best thing to do. Keep him safe, you know, out of mischief.'

'What? throw him into the company of criminals? That young boy? oh, stuff! Lethbridge, think what you are about. Give him a friendly warning. He has one terrible grievance against society as it is. Don't, in mercy, add more to his burden! To imprison him would be to cast a ruinous stigma upon him for his whole life.'

'That's his look-out, not mine. What have I to do with his interests? I am chiefly concerned that he does not shoot O'Malley, or anybody else in my district. These

people, Mauleverer and his gang, are making war on society.'

'May be so! may be so! I sometimes ask myself, as a member of that august body, what we do for them. However, leave that.'

Lethbridge stared at him. Captain Marchmont was putting on his hat to go, and his grim gray face seemed to be sterner than ever. 'Lethbridge, you have some experience of these people, and so have I. We are now within nine weeks of the longest day. The nights are too clear and too short, and the people, moreover, are busy all day cutting turf. I don't believe that their warriors have much appetite for nocturnal exercises. It is my opinion that nothing of any sort will take place before late autumn. Induce O'Malley to go away if possible, or to have a strong guard.'

'He won't do that, but I think he is well enough inclined to go away. He is going up to town to-day to see the Duke of Miniver.'

'Ah! well, let's hope that between them they may settle something of advantage to all concerned. Good day! Let that boy alone, I advise you.'

Captain Marchmont pulled his old white hat tightly down on his head, and made his way to the street.

'Abominable system!' he ruminated as he went. 'Degrading and degraded! Heaven send that I may be able to settle my children in the world somewhere out of this plague-ridden country!'

He pulled his hat well down over his eyes, and turned out of the barrack door and down the street. Friendly were the faces turned towards him, though he never gave one of them a farthing—scorning to buy civility and goodwill like O'Malley and his peers. Lord Cork, Andy, Peggy, Judy, and Peter, and the rest, touched their forelocks and bobbed to him as to 'a good man and fair-dealing gentleman, that had no two ways about him.'

CHAPTER XXXI

‘It would be every man’s thought, and thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks : never a man’s thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine.’

TIGHE O’MALLEY drove home by no means at as quick a rate as he had started. Black care sat on the cushions beside him. He was in a quandary of no ordinary sort. Threatened and in danger he acknowledged himself to be, but it was not cowardly fear, of the physical sort at least, that filled his mind and bent his brow.

‘What will Courthope think of this? Won’t Fredbury laugh?’ The thought stung him like a cut from a whip-lash. ‘I’d like to—ugh! That Lethbridge—I believe that fellow is at the bottom of it all. These cads! their whole prospects depend on stirring up disturbances—more he does the better chance of promotion for him. Wanting to put that brat Mauleverer in jail—my own kith and kin, if he is a bastard—a boy—a child! why!’

By this time Tighe was in such a towering passion that he pulled up the horse violently as if he were about to turn round and execute condign punishment on Lethbridge.

‘A tremendous fine beating is what that fellow wants. Why did I miss the chance of it? Hollo there!’ he shouted to a man who was working a grass-cutter on the terrace. ‘Has Lord Fredbury gone yet?’

‘Yes, sir; went out the Dublin Road gate a while ago there.’

Tighe swept up to the steps, leapt down, throwing the reins to the groom with a ‘Wait!’ and ran in quickly. He

made straight for the morning-room. Lady Blanche and the Courthopes were there.

'Ah!' he said. 'I must run up to town to-night, and try and see the Duke or at least De Burgho. There are some queer complications on foot according to our friend Lethbridge.'

'Oh ho!' uttered Courthope, sitting bolt up in his chair.

'Fredbury's not long gone, is he!' questioned Tighe, so rapidly that Courthope could not speak. 'I hurried home thinking to catch him. I shall drive straight after him.'

'His men have gone with him; you will be alone, Tighe.'

'Phoo!' snorted Tighe. 'I'll never take a guard as long as I'm alive. I'll have no protection. Stuff! Blanche, will you just give my man directions? I must go to these Sessions, and am late enough. Bye-bye everybody!'

'That's first-rate,' said Tighe to himself; 'and by the time this is over, I shall just have leisure to say good-bye and cut my lucky without having to explain everything to Jack Courthope, Esq., M.P. It is he and the likes of him have this country in the state it is in. If they'd let it alone it would do very well. I'll be in town to-night, see what's-his-name first thing in the morning, and telegraph to Blanche to come on at once to-morrow. They'll think I heard something in Dublin—got a tip from the Government.'

He was so delighted with his own masterly *finesse* that hilarious good-humour took the place of the morning's resentment, and those cases which remained to be disposed of when he reached the court-house were dealt with by him with a casuistical leniency that roused the ire of his brother-magistrates, the laughter of the attorneys, and the gratitude and contempt of the delinquents.

* * * * *

Something more than twenty-four hours later Tighe was seeing the Courthopes off to London by one of those Irish mail-boats which he had so recently purposed to decorate in barbarous wise with the skin of an English tourist. He had forgotten all about that now, and was in great good-humour with himself and everybody else. The Duke had not seen him, nor the secretary De Burgho neither. Both were tired of giving interviews to alarmed, or would-be

alarmist, country squires. The Fenian army was a mere skeleton, the eternally-promised 'rising' an *ignis fatuus*, evanescent and fleeting as the phantom ship of the Flying Dutchman. The permanent officials who jerk the wires, that move the puppets called Viceroy and Co., were just making up their minds that they were tired of the game, that the bubble they had so elaborately blown must be pricked, that their friends and relations the lawyers, that hungry pack ever yelping at the Castle gates, must be let have their innings. So everybody wore his gravest face; the Dublin paving-stones talked of High Treason, or Treason Felony, and one might have thought from the bearing and conversation of the official class, whose interests were deeply involved in making the most of the situation, that the Queen's crown was in danger of falling to the music of the Jew's harps and concertinas of the drilling-parties just as Jericho fell to the trumpets of Joshua.

'Well!' said Courthope, 'we should be better pleased, you know, if you were going over with us.'

Tighe treated this with his usual manner, at once scornful and jocularly good-humoured. He felt thoroughly glad to have shipped the gentleman in search of information. Courthope was a good fellow, but he was a bit of a prig. However, this was the last of it.

'Ida,' Tighe exclaimed, 'when this business has blown over you must come back and pay us a more comfortable visit. Chich is coming over again soon, he says.'

'Oh, is he?' she ejaculated rather faintly. Her old fears returned tenfold. She looked at Tighe as though she would have liked as much to shoot him as one of his own Fenian tenants.

As the ship clove her way out of the harbour mouth she and her husband turned from the contemplation of the voluminous white handkerchief which their late host, in his character of Irish entertainer, was energetically waving to them. Courthope gave himself a shake as if of relief.

'I shall never go back there,' hissed Mrs. Courthope. 'Wish I had never gone!' Her white teeth were gleaming; her dark eyes were bright with vexation.

'I vow I never want to see the place or people again.

It is fearful, fearful! Gives one the feeling of the Ten Commandments turned inside out or something dreadful of the sort. It has not agreed with me either.'

She heard him with delight.

'I should fancy not. Really, Jack, you know, the mouldiness of that house! Why, every room smelt, and as for the rest—if the cleaning matched the housemaiding—they never half dusted——'

'There, there! Ida, now! That will do, my dear. Tighe and Blanche were as kind as could have been wished. It's not fair, you know.'

* * * * *

Tighe meantime had stuffed his handkerchief into his pocket, and was leisurely taking his way to the Royal George Yacht Club to see who might be there.

'I'm not inhospitable,' he said to himself, with profound conviction. 'No, my worst enemy could not say that of me; but I confess I'm unfeignedly glad to see the back of my dear friend Jack Courthope. English people are best in their own country. That everlasting criticising, comparing—they can't take anything by itself—everything is relative with them, damnably comparative, as I heard in some play. It's a most detestable attitude of mind, and one and all of them put it on the minute they have got their valises packed.'

By this time he was at the club. Standing under its low portico were some three or four men of his acquaintance, all Irish, all landlords, all having run up to town to convince everybody that the country was in a fearful state, that there was nothing wrong at all, that it was overgoverned, and that it was not governed at all. Such a happy concatenation of differences augured well to Tighe O'Malley for a pleasant convivial evening after his own heart. So they sat down together to dinner, and from the chaos of pessimism and optimism, the conflict of each man's experience, opinions, and desires, there was evolved, by the time the talk had drifted in the usual inevitable manner from argument to witty anecdotes, only one solid dogma, subscribed equally by all, *i.e.* that no Englishman ever did, could, would, or had any right to understand Ireland or the Irish.

CHAPTER XXXII

‘Adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see in needle-works and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground. Judge, therefore, of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye.’

THE flight of the O'Malleys, it need not be said, left Barrettstown in a perfect whirl of excitement. It was a surprise; every one of their actions had been seen and commented on, and this move had not been led up to. Mr. Ansdale's visit to the Fir House had been duly recounted by the red-haired musician, but that excited little comment. He went there to pay his respects to the Mauleverers. ‘It's not more than what they ought all of them to do,’ said Lord Cork. Then came Tighe's visit to the police barrack. They surmised that the intended raid for arms, of which he had probably got wind, had frightened away the family, and every one was in consequence very proud; it was an earnest of future successes. Jim Cadogan, who just now was drinking particularly hard, wagged his head delightedly when the news reached him that the master was after sending down word from Dublin to her ladyship to come up on that minute, and that all the luggage was to go, and the servants were to be sent back to London. This was all pleasant news, insomuch as it was a tribute to the importance of the local b's and c's; not so pleasant was it to hear that all the guns at Barrettstown Castle had been sent down to the barrack, a raid on which last would be manifest folly.

Peter Quin the shopkeeper, though he affected to grin and chuckle with the rest over the rapid discomfiture of O'Malley, reflected not too comfortably upon the fact that a custom worth ten pounds a week to him had been carried off from the town. The beggars also missed Tighe O'Malley's ostentatious sixpences. However, Andy and his spouse, with Lord Cork and the rest, shook their rags philosophically and dreamed consolatory dreams of the nice cabin and potato garden that loomed in the near future for each of them. It gave an air of reality to the hitherto somewhat shadowy conspiracy. Something visible and tangible had at last come of the nocturnal meetings, subscriptions, and drillings. Even the Jew's-harpist thought better of himself, and practised his nigger melodies more assiduously.

The only person in the town who really had a clue to the true meaning of the O'Malleys' exodus was the agent Captain Marchmont, and he kept his opinion to himself. Father Paul Conroy heard from the housekeeper that Lady Blanche had been telegraphed to by 'himself' to come up to town without delay. This puzzled his reverence greatly, for he did not believe that there was any real danger to the family, and, moreover, he knew how little O'Malley cared for the conspiracy. There was something else, something else under it all, and as soon as his two o'clock dinner was eaten he put off the old cassock and donned the body coat of circumstance, surmounted his grizzled pate with the Carolina hat of ceremony, and strolled leisurely down the road in the direction of the town. All Barrettstown dined at two or thereabouts, and from every cabin door issued the unmistakable smell of potatoes, varied occasionally, in the case of the poorer dwellings, by Indian meal, sometimes burnt. Here and there the pot, still smoking, had been rolled out by the side of the door, where the hungry and complaining hens, tantalised, mounted guard around it. A labouring man or two, who had come home for dinner, touched their hats to his reverence, as they took their way back to work. Here and there such of the children as could not be accommodated at the table or round the kish, sat on the doorsteps, gnawing potatoes in full view of the live

stock, some of whom seemed inclined to dispute possession with them. Father Paul drove off a cur dog that had put his forefeet in one urchin's lap, and was trying to get hold of his potato. The owner's mouth was too full to cry for help, but not too full to grin his thanks to his protector.

Over the bridge and along the other side of the Barrett-water Father Paul pursued his way, pensive and almost uneasy, he knew not why. At last he turned in at the side gate of the Quaker's house, bending as usual the Carolina hat to avoid the contact of the ivy pendent overhead.

Kitty Macan was in the hall. The door being open, she bade him her usual reverential welcome, and opened the sitting-room door.

'Well, well, well, Miss D'Arcy! How do I find you to-day?' he said, laying the hat on the table where the little lamp burned before the statuette, and then turning round. Juliet D'Arcy looked up at him. She had an anxious bewildered look, that disappeared in great part at the sight of her trusty friend, but she seemed excited about something.

'I thought you would never come, father, to-day, and that Kitty Macan was so long over the dinner. We are late, you see. Marion, Marion, I say, will you finish your dinner? Not a crumb of food for days will she eat. Oh dear! oh dear! and, Godfrey, you are no better.'

'Let me alone, Aunt Jul!' Godfrey answered in a low but angry voice.

They were sitting at the table with her. The dinner—it was a fast day—consisted of eggs, potatoes, and milk; a loaf of whole meal bread, freshly-baked by Kitty in her pot-oven, smoked on its platter. Juliet had a coffee-tray before her, and salad, which she had learned to eat when travelling, was piled in an old glass dish that was shaped like a boat, and mounted on a stand. Gertrude had not yet returned from school, and her place was vacant.

Father Paul passed behind Marion's chair, and as he did so laid his kindly hand caressingly on her dark glossy head, drooped melancholy-wise as it was. Then he settled himself in his wonted seat—a big, deep, round-backed chair opposite Miss D'Arcy's cupboard, which was now swinging

wide open and displaying its manifold treasures to the public view.

'It is all nonsense!' continued Miss D'Arcy, taking up the lapsed thread of a previous discourse. 'You can eat if you choose. Father Conroy, I will offer you a cup of coffee.'

'I won't take any coffee,' said Marion, who thought that this was addressed to her.

'No one asked you,' said Miss D'Arcy angrily. 'It is time enough for you to refuse then, miss. I do not know what to do,' she said, setting down the coffee-pot on the tray, and turning round helplessly to Father Paul. 'They are too much for me, altogether! I cannot stand this any longer.' Two large tears gathered in Miss D'Arcy's eyes, and overflowing trickled down her cheeks.

'My dear creature!' said Father Paul, half rising and leaning forward with hand outstretched as though to aid her.

Marion looked up and round. Seeing her aunt's distress, she stepped gently from her chair, stooped and kissed her cheek, and taking up the coffee-pot, finished pouring out the cup Miss D'Arcy had begun. She handed this to Father Paul, who thought, as he took it, that something out of the common was surely going on, the girl was so pale and unhappy-looking. Then Marion gave her arm to Miss D'Arcy, and helping her with one hand, turned her chair back from the table and round to the fireside in its usual place. Juliet seemed calmed again, and having sighed deeply, fixed her eyes on Father Paul's face as if in expectation. Father Paul's eyes, however, were engaged in following Marion's movements. He seemed to be lost in thought, and forgot the coffee which, untouched yet, was in his hand. Marion presently withdrew into the window-seat, and letting herself fall softly into her own favourite corner, picked up the book that lay open there, and seemed as if she read.

'You have not told me how you are, Miss D'Arcy,' asked Father Paul, after a moment or two.

'I am not well,' replied Juliet querulously. She stooped forward and picked two or three sods out of the turf-basket beside the fire, and threw them on it, sending with practised

hand each sod exactly on the spot that needed it. 'I am not well, Father Conroy. I have had no sleep, and I do not know why. I am disturbed and anxious. These children have no consideration for me, sir! You have seen just now——' an eloquent gesture of her hands finished this. 'They have no pity, no pity upon me. Godfrey there!'

Father Paul turned about in his chair, evidently with the intention of addressing Godfrey, but the youth's place was vacant. The instant that Father Paul had seated himself he had risen and glided gently and noiselessly out of the room. Father Conroy sighed heavily and resumed his pose. Juliet D'Arcy wiped her eyes with her pocket-handkerchief, and seemed to grow calmer. His presence and mute sympathy always affected her. She needed this solace most on those days, now growing rarer and rarer, when her mind was less clouded than usual, and she could best realise the state of things around her, grasp and take into account her circumstances. Then it was that Godfrey's moody dark looks oppressed and terrified her, that Marion's quiet sadness and depression weighed on her, like some terrible accusation, shapeless and unworded yet, but growing in intensity and volume, a gathering storm that one day must break—and then—to think merely of their future, of what must come, when she herself should have stepped over their horizon and be gone, made cold perspiration stand on Juliet D'Arcy's brow. At these times she prayed, caused others to pray, wrote to the holy monk in Dijon, to the *Carmes discalquées* somewhere else, sent notes of requests for prayers to the nuns in Gertrude's convent school, nor even disdained the saintly communion and spiritual fellowship of the ragged fraternity at the chapel door on Sunday, disbursing pennies among them with a liberality that invoked far more than market value of blessings. They knew she did not heed their 'good word,' that she did not live by opinion, nor care about it, and they respected her as they did Captain Marchmont. It was a great compliment, even the ungracious Judy Lehan felt it to be such, to have Miss D'Arcy say to each one over the side of her bath-

chair, as she handed a coin, 'Say a prayer for my intention, my good woman,' or 'my good man,' as the case might be, and they one and all fulfilled the request with goodwill. They forgot that she had a soul to save, and forebore to say even to themselves that her motive was selfish, as they dropped lines of curtseys and bows to the bath-chair as it came and went among the crowd in the chapel yard.

Then the cloud seemed for another while dispelled. She was growing weaker, physically and mentally, as time went on, and it was not often now, perhaps happily for them all, that she was in a condition to trouble herself about the almost tragic circumstances of her family.

Father Paul felt as she did, but his anxiety was ever present. Juliet's, if acuter, was but intermittent, thanks to her malady. He tried to reason himself out of his gloomy forebodings, and to shake them off, whereas Miss D'Arcy dwelt deliberately upon hers. Whenever she could grasp them at all, she never let go her hold.

'He does not mean it. There, you distress yourself for nothing!' the old priest said soothingly.

Marion lifted her head and looked at him for a moment. All dimmed as they were with weeping, a world of despair was in her eyes.

At that moment the door opened at the bidding of no uncertain hand, and Gertrude, her cheeks glowing red from running, her brown curls all flying loose, tossed her music folio and bag of books into a corner.

'Father Paul!' she said, and first kissing her grand-aunt's cheek, she went and rubbed her cheek against his shoulder.

His face brightened at the sight of her—'Ah, ah!' he uttered, pleased.

'Get your dinner!' ordered Miss D'Arcy. 'Marion, ring for hot potatoes for the child, and see that there are eggs boiled for her. Here is a beautiful egg, a turkey's egg, Gertrude.'

'No, I'll have a little one. There, Aunt Jul, give me my own game pullet's egg—that pretty little yellow one that I brought you in this morning.'

'Dear, ah dear! What dinner is that for the child, and she growing so fast?' grumbled Father Paul. 'Take the turkey's egg, do!'

'No!' said the object of all this solicitude, very curtly and decidedly. 'Father Paul, I was kept in to-day. It was all that Sister Rose de Lima—she's so cross! There is no pleasing her.'

'That's true, Lord knows!' ejaculated Father Paul. 'But if you were kept in, how are you home so soon?'

Gertrude laughed. 'I came through the window. She locked the door, and raked out the fire, and as soon as I thought she would be well at her dinner, I just climbed up on the desk and opened the window and got out. I was so hungry! That keeping in is dreadful nonsense!'

'Here, now!' said Kitty Macan, laying down a dish of roasted potatoes before the speaker. 'Here is your dinner, child, and faith and soul!—I ask pardon, your reverence—I never will keep dinner hot again for you so long as you live. 'Tis ridiculous! so it is! My Lord! who could stand it?' Six times a week Kitty said this, so no one took any notice of it.

'Oh! Father Paul, do you know that all the O'Malleys have gone away, Lady Blanche and all? And our friend that I liked so much—didn't you like him?—Mr. Ansdale—he went the day before yesterday. I was so sorry—indeed I was—but he will come back.'

'What do you know about it?' asked Father Paul.

'Marion,' cried Gertrude, 'give me the milk jug, and that clean cup, please. Father Paul, I know because he told me. He said to me he would come back soon, as soon as he could. Oh, I do hope he will! Was he not beautiful? He was far prettier, I think, than Godfrey. He had blue eyes; and how he was dressed! I think him the most beautiful man that ever lived. Marion, I say, was he not beautiful? And he is to be a lord one day when his uncle dies, and to be ever so rich, much richer than Tighe O'Malley.'

'Come, that is no business of yours,' grumbled Father Paul. 'What have you to do or to say to those things?'

Marion,' he said, turning to the eldest sister, 'that child has too much tongue for her years.

She made no reply. Her head was turned away from the room and its inmates, her thoughts much further still. Nevertheless, Father Paul had been heard by her. Though in a distant dreamy kind of way, as if his words took a long time to travel to her consciousness, they did reach it, and woke some unpleasant feeling, touched the tender edge of a sore spot.

'No business of hers!' she said to herself, 'and no business of mine either. No doubt that is what he means.' She lifted up her book again, opened it, and bent her head over its pages. Not one word could she see or know for the blinding mist of tears that obscured her eyes. When Gertrude left the room, which she did soon, taking with her a huge platterful to her dependants outside, Marion stole unobserved behind her, leaving her aunt still talking.

'Don't find fault with her,' Miss D'Arcy observed, resuming her querulous note. 'The child is no more than natural. The young man of whom she speaks was here several times. He paid me a visit,' she said impressively—she had told Father Paul this before, more than once. 'I think very well of him. He is a gentleman, and I suppose some relative of O'Malley's wife. Yes,' continued Juliet, 'anything O'Malley has to boast of always came with the women of the family. His mother was a Mauleverer, his wife a MacAnalley, yet this was not enough to make a gentleman of him. No, these O'Malleys were rough, every one of them—his father was just a handsome bog trotter—had no manners at all. O'Malley has neither his father's good looks nor his mother's breeding. I can't say what his wife may have done for him, but there was certainly room for improvement—great room for improvement. Gertrude, child! come and take Father Conroy's cup, and give him a little more coffee. Oh dear! she is gone. Help yourself, then. Father Conroy do you remember that cousin of O'Malley's father—he lived just up above your father's place—the big old man, and lame, who married the heiress? Surely you recollect hearing of the runaway match they made. It

was about the time of the first great Rising, just before Emancipation, and——'

Juliet and her kinsman were now well launched into what is perhaps the most popular and generally followed amusement of the country—colloquing, *i.e.* tracing up pedigrees, establishing relationships, settling questions of kinship to the very remotest degree. There was no red book or 'landed gentry' within her ken, and no need for one either. She and Father Conroy knew the rightful owners as well as the men in possession of every acre in Clare county, and many other counties as well, their marriages and intermarriages. They could have given points to the College of Heralds, and when Juliet was well enough, and her head in consequence clear, it was her delight to sit over the turf fire with Father Paul, and reconstruct the houses of Clare as they used to be in the old days; as she remembered them when a child. She remembered also the legends of the times before the Rebellion. Her mother had seen the French warships in Bantry Bay. She recollected, as did Father Paul, the Tithe War and its gruesome incidents, the Famine, and the Encumbered Estates Court Act, and all the landowners who were broken and ruined by it. It was an inexhaustible store to both of them, and Father Paul and herself, with the help of a Dublin daily paper, were never for a moment lacking in historical material for conversation.

And as it was with them so was it also with the other inhabitants. The beggar tribe spent their days in the same process of cud-chewing. There was never anything new. Like a much quoted once-reigning family, they forgot nothing, they learned nothing. Jim Cadogan, together with Fenlon, and now and again a commercial traveller, exchanged fragmentary and ill-used quotations from Tom Paine, Voltaire, the *Social Contract*, and latter-day American organs of revolutionary opinion. These did not advance matters much. The farmer's sons and the labouring men thought them good enough accompaniments to nocturnal sedition and new whisky, but, viewed by daylight and when sober, they could not fit them to their scheme of things.

When Fenlon declaimed against priestcraft, they laughed in his face, for Father Conroy, who had baptized every one of their shaggy heads, was one of the most popular pastors in Ireland. They allowed that he got his money easily, that he never did a hard day's work in his life, but each confessed openly that his reverence was quite right if he could live without it. Cadogan, whose animosity to priests was completely imitative, and general rather than particular, always was the first to drop back from abstract to concrete subjects of conversation. What did he know? How could he know? The great wave of revolution that had passed from France to America, stepping firmly down in England as it went, had overleaped Ireland completely. The Irish had gained or learned nothing by the France of those days, save the phantom appearance of the warships on their coast, and some equally misty intrigues in Paris. The echoes of the Great Revolution fell and died in Dublin, nothing of it reached farther, no real sympathy was ever set up. The stale backwash of American opinion, as conveyed by half-educated, almost illiterate, emissaries such as Fenlon—could take no hold upon his listeners, still less could they place their grievances to the account of a Church which had been prescribed, persecuted, and harried in even measure with their own forefathers, and which in their own days was only tolerated and was perpetually insulted. They identified the landlords with the aristocrats, but could go no further than that. They were simply bewildered. Juliet D'Arcy and her relative were in much the same plight. The present was unsatisfactory, the future uncertain, if not hopeless. So they also took refuge in the past. There there was life and active romance, perhaps glory. Who knew? Time might bring about a wonder—the wheel might turn for them at last.

CHAPTER XXXIII

'I saw a smith stand with his hammer thus—
The while his iron did on the anvil cool—
With open mouth swallowing a tailor's news.'

MAY had followed April, the birds' nests were nearly all empty; every petal of the apple blossoms was gone, and tiny round apples like little young rosebuds clustered in the now full green of the leaves. Gone was every primrose, save a few that lingered fondly in dark places and evaded the bidding of the sun that had marshalled all their pale sisterhood together, and, with the daffodils and jonquils and dog-violets, trooped them all off for another year. The wallflowers had run up in long stems, well plenished with seed-pods. Some, over heavy, had tumbled over and lay sprawling over the ragged box-edges. The musk had come up, strong and thick, and was in blossom; mignonette, which the children always sowed for Juliet D'Arcy's special gratification, promised a thick crop. It was the transition stage between spring and summer, and the flowers marked it in their own way. The lilac was nearly all gone; in the shady places only did a cluster or two remain; the rest had turned brown and was disappearing fast, hardly missed for the hawthorn, which spread itself in full blossom. The jonquils were missing, and instead of the white narcissus some early buds of the apothecary rose showed here and there their bright red spark. Quantities of roses were growing everywhere in the garden, and climbing roses were against the wall. The Quaker miller had loved them, and

this much at least of his old place spoke for him still and kept his memory sweet.

Marion, the tears still glistening on her eyelashes, was walking up and down her favourite walk, a tortuous path, shady now that the trees had donned their summer garb. The birds were challenging and answering each other. There seemed to be a duet between the thrushes, one at each end of the garden, and she could hear also the quacking of the ducks from the potato patch, where Kitty Macan's male auxiliary was. Rody, who was gardener as well as water-carrier and general aide-de-camp, was digging, or rather scratching the ground, between the irregularly-planted drills of potatoes which were now well on in the stalk, and badly in need of the trenching which he had at last found time to do. When he saw Marion enter the garden he began to make a huge show of industry, striking the back of his shovel with great emphasis upon the stones as he turned them up, and thereby puzzling and disturbing a family of ducks who were following all his movements closely, and snapping every worm that appeared the moment he drew the shovel out of the earth. Miss Marion, evincing no symptom of appreciation of these extra efforts, in fact having disappeared from his view among the trees, Rody relaxed the strain he had put upon himself, and regardless of the expectant attitude of the ducks, reduced his strokes to their normal number and force. Then he laid the shovel down altogether, and taking hold of the wheelbarrow, drew it a little up the path to where there was an opening that would give him a view of Miss Marion and what she was doing. She was sitting on a bank, and had her back turned to him, to Rody's content, though why he should be contented he did not in the least know. Miss Marion never interfered with him. She might have seen him lying flat on his back smoking, as he had been all the time the family were at dinner, and she would not have thought or said anything about it. It was pure habit on Rody's part. After this manœuvre with the wheelbarrow he turned up a few more shovelfuls of earth; then the sound of a creaking cart wheel reached his ears from the road. He stuck the

shovel into the ground, and ran quickly to the door to see who it could be. The ducks, their worms cut off thus arbitrarily, and left with only a doubtful prospect of more, squatted close round the shovel, exchanging discontented notes. Rody opened the garden door cautiously, and shading his eyes from the sun, looked across the osier field to the creaking cart which was coming close now. He knew the horse at once, Ahearne's cart horse from Lambert's Castle, and presently there appeared walking behind it, Mat the servant-boy from the same place. The instant Rody recognised him he leapt down the bank, and restraining with difficulty a shout of joy, jumped over the stepping-stones and found himself at the roadside gap before the cart had got up to it.

'The top of the morning to you, Mat!' he hailed with joy. 'Isn't that a lovely day for you?'

Mat nodded without taking his pipe out of his mouth, and seemed scarcely inclined to slacken his steps.

'How's all above wit' you, Mat?' continued Rody.

'Well, troth! well enough we are, God lave us so! I'm thankful to you, Rody,' answered the newcomer, who seemed inclined to make amends for his previous stiffness of manner. 'And how are all your quality?'

'We's all well enough. The mistress she's just middling as usual—no more—but the rest of us is finely, thank God! Would you give us just a draw of de pipe, Mat? I am rayduced to smoke—I could not tell you what I'm smoking.' By this he meant that he had eked out his scanty supply of tobacco with turf-ashes.

Mat nodded and handed over his pipe, after which he stood with his hands in his pockets, measuring with his eye the rate at which the horse was moving onward, and evidently debating whether to stop him or not.

Rody while smoking was studying Mat's countenance, in which he evidently discerned something unusual as well as a distinct expression of ill-humour. Rody's very eyes were dilated with curiosity, but he diplomatically bided his time.

'Way, way!' he shouted to the horse, which stopped

as willingly and quickly as though its own inclination had been divined. 'Sit down, can't ye, Mat, and take a rest!'

Mat flung himself against the bank beside his friend, flung his cap on the ground, ran his hand through his hair, and then, as though he could contain himself no longer, burst out—

'I'm lavin'.' Then, seeing Rody's round eyes open wider still, and the pipe almost fall from his sympathetic mouth, which opened correspondingly, he added, 'Lavin' above there!'

'La—a—ard!'

'No one could stand it, man—not one livin'! We're all destroyed by that Delanty woman. Oh! I sed it over and over. I mistrusted her ever since the day she set foot in the street of Lambert's Castle. Those Waterford women are all alike; what ailed him not to take a girl belonging to this county? Fortune! All the fortunes in Cork would not fetch me to mass with her, an' I told her that too, to her face I told it to her. The black heifer is dead, dead with murrain, an' she blames it on me now, ses I didn't attend to the baste, and sure she wouldn't allow the old mistress to tie the worm knot over the creature—many's the cow an' horse I've seen that cure; but faith! Luke's wife bid her not to interfere with her ignorant vulgarness.'

'She said that to Mrs. Ahearne? Lord!!'

'Pho! dat's notin' to what she trates 'em to, as if she was fit to mention the same day as de Ahearnes; but wait till I tell you—she never rises off de bed till good nine o'clock in the day, and after it, an' dose two servants she has dere—two Waterford divils like herself! Oh! man Rody, 'tis destruction to be lookin' on at dem! I'm lavin' whatever! I'll ship to Amerikay.'

'An' Luke?'

'Luke sides the wife in all tings soever, an' turned to his mother dere last week, when the other was abusin' an' miscallin' her, and said, 'twas her own desires, 'twas her own choosin', an' just put up wit' what she got. Margaret Capel she never crossed the door since she married Harry Capel. We's the scandle of the country-side, Rody. I'm

shamed to show myself at chapel. An' Luke, he's drinkin' steady.'

'He was always pretty good at dat.'

'Oh, fait den! I can tell you he is no worse dan others!' answered Mat fierily. 'Poor Luke! I'm sorry for him. Dat Grimes the horse-jobber, he is never out of dat house either, an' for cards an' gam'lin', gam'lin'!—dere's reason in all tings, an' tings has deir seasons, but I'll stop dere no longer! 'Tis no place for me.'

'An' where will you go, Mat?'

'I'll go to my sisters in Ohio. I'll lave above there anyhow!'

'I will go to America, too,' observed Rody in a half-crying tone, and in perfect good faith. He had adopted every one of Mat's grievances as his own. "'Tis a fright to see the mischief dat woman is doing.'

'Well an' all!' moralised Mat, who felt much relieved by his act of confidence. 'She is able to spend her fortune if she has it; and mind you, the father gave her three hundred short of what he promised—he did so!'

'Is it, an' she so dead ugly an' old as she is?'

'Ay! Did ever ye hear such impidence? Oh, the unfortunate boy!' moaned Mat. 'He's cheated in her entirely. She's that grand, Rody! She don't wet her finger from morning to night, pretends she never even saw any one make a bit of bread—dress herself, and make Luke drive her out in the new side car, to show herself off to the country. Dat's all the work she does.'

'Why does he do it? It's a fine whacking I'd give such a womankind as dat, if she was my own mudder, begob would I!'

''Tis a nice beginning for us,' continued Mat. 'I can't make out Luke: he is like one mad. He dares his fader and mudder to say one word against her, an' yet I tink he hates the sight of her, yet he sides her against dem both. Oh, Lord! I am sick of my life. I think my month never will be up to get away. Luke, he prays me to stop wit' him, but I will not—there is no peace in that house.'

'Will you go to America, Mat? I will go wit' you if so.'

'I surely will,' replied Mat. 'Who is dis coming up? Tony's wife Molly. Good morning to you, Mrs. Devoy, ma'am!' hailed Mat, touching his hat, as if it had been Miss D'Arcy herself.

'Fine day to you, Mrs. Devoy, ma'am,' echoed Rody, also touching his ragged old headpiece.

Tony Devoy's wife returned these civilities in like spirit. She was carrying an infant not more than a month or so old. Another child hardly able to walk was clinging to her ragged skirt. She was young, not yet twenty-eight, and was the mother of nine, and as she was always half-starved, and very often rather more than half-starved, her appearance was not cheerful. She had been extremely pretty in her time, a very short one, for she had made a runaway match at seventeen with her father's labouring man, more to escape being forced to marry a well-to-do farmer of some sixty-five years of age than for any passion she entertained for Tony. Poor as she was she never regretted this step save for the estrangement it had made between her and her people. They had never forgiven her for her disregard for their interests, and it was true that certain calamities which afterwards overtook them were ascribable in part to her declining the rich match. Her father became unable to pay his rent, and had to give up the farm. This they held could have been avoided if the old farmer would have given security, which he would only do on condition of her marrying him. The agent put them out of the farm, which he handed over to a tenant with capital. The brothers and sisters went to America, and sent home money to support the old people, who took a cabin and a small patch of land in the neighbourhood of their old holding. Her father was dead, but the mother lived on in the same place, alone, poor, and in bad health. Molly fretted about her perpetually, and although not on speaking terms with her, had had mysterious ways of getting news from her. Mary Cadogan at the post-office had a friend in the same district, and through this person, mother and daughter, without holding direct communication with each other, still exchanged their news. The old woman sent her from time to time a few shillings

out of her American remittances, but these of late had become scanty. One daughter had married and could send nothing. The sons at no time contributed anything to her support, following in that the general rule, and she was now depending on the earnings of the one unmarried daughter, who paid the rent and gave her regularly ten shillings a month to live on, as well as an extra pound or two to get her turf cut and drawn and the potatoes set in their respective seasons.

Molly was in more than usual trouble to-day. She generally looked hungry, but there was something more than hunger in her face now.

'Rody,' she said timidly, 'could you tell, is Miss Marion inside?'

'She is, Mrs. Devoy; she is inside.'

'Rody, dear, do you think you could just ask her to speak with me?'

'I'll tell you now!' answered Rody, instantaneously resolving to give himself no such trouble. 'Miss Marion is above dere in the garden, and what you can do is just walk in the door and speak with her. She's right forenent you in the trees.' He pointed to the footpath at his back as he spoke.

Molly Devoy knew him of old, and with a 'Thank you kindly, Rody!' and a deep sigh, swung one baby in the shawl across her shoulders, lifted the other on her arm, and so loaded, crossed to the garden door on top of the bank. Arrived at the foot of this, she set down her burden and shifted the infant off her shoulders. Then she straightened her hood, smoothed her thick hair, and climbing up the steps, opened the door quietly. She looked back to whence the two men were still talking, in the hope that Rody would come to her aid, but there was no sign of his stirring, and thrown on her own resources, she closed the door once more.

Molly looked round her admiringly at the flowers and shrubs, and drew a deep breath appreciative of the sweet flower-laden air. She never saw a flower save at mass. Her own house, a cabin on the bog edge, had a manure-heap before its one window, and the approach to the door

lay through a pool of liquid filth. The same kind of feeling came over her again, only not so intense, that she felt at High Mass on Easter Sunday, or Corpus Christi, a sense of rest, of peace, almost amounting to joy. The purple wrappings that symbolised earthly suffering and travail were gone, and in their place were flowers, lights, incense, music. A foreshadowing of heaven, if only a fleeting one, was vouchsafed to her grateful eyes. It was Molly's one consolation, as it had been also Helen Talbot's, in common with the poor in general of Barrettsdown and elsewhere. They would have appreciated it still more could they have left their hunger outside the church door as they did the other disagreeables of existence, but perhaps this only added a charm to those anticipated by them in the great hereafter.

'Tis well to be quality,' sighed Molly, but not enviously, and she advanced slowly, and taking care of the borders and branches, looking about her for the young mistress. At last, after several paths had been traversed, she espied the object of her search sitting underneath the overhanging boughs of some old trees, which protected and shadowed the well. Molly curtsied, and Marion having recognised her, rose and came slowly towards her. Molly was well known to her. She made clothes sometimes for the tribe of little children, and when Devoy was out of work Marion took care that Kitty Macan's followers did not absorb all the spare eatables of the kitchen. Molly never came to beg. She was quite above that. Natural shyness, if not pride, would have prevented her. She was pleased with and thankful for the young lady's notice, and gladly accepted any help she could get. She held that God had sent it to her, and that it was no more than her due from Him. He having sent her nine children, they had to be provided for, and seven shillings a week being insufficient, she looked upon adventitious aid as being as naturally hers as the thrushes and blackbirds did, or Rody's ducks the worms.

Marion advanced but slowly, and her face was not friendly. She was displeased with Molly for coming into the garden, and she was not in the frame of mind, resentful and

despairing as she felt, to sympathise with any one whose troubles were only material.

'I envy even her in some things,' murmured Marion, looking at her clients grouped on the path before her. Molly's still pretty blue eyes had a diffident, nearly tearful look. The smallest baby had gone to sleep on her shoulder. The other, a half-naked cherub, had retreated behind the mother's back, and thence peeped round, thinking of nothing but the bread and jam which the young lady's appearance promised to him.

'Well, Molly!' she began, almost severely. 'Who told you to come here?'

Molly was now recovering a third curtsey. She flushed all over her face, and the tears welled up to her eyes.

'I ask your pardon, Miss Marion,' she said confusedly, and half turning to go. 'I wanted Rody to take you the message, but he bid me come myself, and said you were in the garden. I never——' she stopped almost with a sob.

'Oh, Rody! it was Rody! I see, Molly, never mind! added Marion hastily. 'Come up with me to the kitchen now. I am not feeling very well to-day.'

She pressed both hands to her head, and lifted back the thick masses of hair which had slipped forward over her brows. Her eyelids were heavy, and dark circles surrounded them. 'Micky, is that you? Run on, and we will see if Kitty has anything.' She walked on in front, partly that she might not see Molly's troubled face, partly that Molly might not see hers. Micky kept pace with her gladly.

Molly trotted after them obediently. She had not come to beg. She had a small matter of business, and she hoped that an auspicious moment might occur before the interview was over. The present one was not suitable. They reached the yard. Then Marion led them under a green trellis porch into the kitchen. Kitty Macan was sitting by the fire knitting, and directing the operations of the female aide-de-camp, who was washing up dishes with a truly fearful din. The cat sat close to Kitty beside the turf-ashes, and in the turf-ashes sat Kitty's tea-pot. Marion,

who knew her ways, had expected to find the tea-pot in that place at this hour.

'I want a cup of tea for Molly,' she said. 'Kitty, get some bread and butter.'

'Oh no! Miss Marion. No, I thank you kindly,' protested Molly. 'Good-day to you, Mrs. Macan, and if you please do not disturb yourself. I only came down just to see yourself, Miss Marion. Indeed, indeed!' she continued, 'I do not at all wish to give trouble.'

Poor Molly, she wished herself far enough off, and in her heart almost cursed lazy Rody that would not do her errand for her. Had he asked Miss Marion to speak with her, instead of sending her to intrude herself into the lady's presence, all would have gone well. But now Kitty Macan's face, ever candid, betrayed unmixed displeasure. Miss Marion's good-nature was clearly perfunctory; she was not even thinking of what she was doing. Molly could see that by the tone in which she spoke, and the far-away wistful look in her eyes. It was plain that she herself was in trouble. It had all fallen out unluckily. Tears gathered in Molly's eyes, and a flush mounted in her cheeks. Kitty Macan, Turk though she was, noticing her embarrassment, felt moved to compassion, and placed a chair for her with some show of cordiality. Kitty had a great notion of hierarchy. Mrs. Devoy was not like the commonalty, and though unwelcome, was entitled to a certain measure of respect.

'Take your tea, Molly!' said Marion. 'As you go out, I will see you again.' She returned to the garden, leaving them together. There was nothing for it but to obey. Molly, elastic of disposition as any one else, before long was engaged in a friendly chat with Kitty, and a good twenty minutes elapsed before she again appeared on Miss Marion's horizon.

'Well, Molly! you had a message for me,' Marion observed, in a rather more sympathetic tone, for she had noticed the anxious look in her client's eyes, and felt sorry for having treated her with coldness.

Molly curtsied again. 'Indeed, miss! I am a trouble

to you, but what can I do? My heart is pulled in two this while back. It is my mother; she lives up back from Limerick in the Glen of Connor district. 'Tis over forty miles away, and there she is dying, and all by herself. Oh, Miss Marion! alannah machree!' and Molly wailed right out from her heart. 'If I could only go to her, just only to see that she got the priest before she died. Oh, Miss Marion! just think of that lone creature, that reared sixteen of a family, and sent ten of them to Heaven before herself, and there she is left desolate to die, and no one to lend a hand to her for this world or the next. Oh, my God! my dear Lord! It is cruel! it is that!'

'Yes!' said Marion, startled at Molly's vehemence. 'It is dreadful to think of it!'

Molly was leaning against the trunk of a tree beside the path, crying without restraint now.

'Oh, Miss Marion! I knew you would feel for me—I did so! And you know they all fell out wit' me because I would not agree to the match with old Phelan. 'Tis twelve year ago now, an' all that came on them since they blamed it on me. But there she is dying, and Ellen Cassidy, that is her next neighbour, she has written to Mary Cadogan at the post-office to let me know she cannot pass this week. Oh, Miss Marion, and I never to see her! Oh vo! oh vo!'

The tears, long gathered in Marion's eyes, were running over now. Molly's distress was heartbreaking to see, and it was real, not theatrical, or got up to order like the beggars' performances in the town.

'What would you like, Molly? To go to her? I see—yes—but——' She reflected that she had no money. Miss D'Arcy had, but it was useless to ask Aunt Ju to give charity in any form save food. What could she do? A host of thoughts ran through her mind. Father Paul! The idea of asking him was not exactly promising, for he was very badly off just now; the debt on the Church was not yet paid off. There was Father Collins—she would not ask him.

'Molly, how much would do you?'

'The railway fare, it is five shillings. You have to go round by the junction, and if I had it even, to leave the children, I cannot do it.'

'Never mind them! You could not leave the baby. Peggy Lehan would mind the others. But that is not the question. Molly! good-bye for to-day. I'll come and tell you about this early to-morrow. But, Molly!' she cried over her shoulder as she went; 'I don't *think* I can do anything.'

'God's blessing follow and attend you, all round the world, and my blessing go with it, my beautiful young creature!' prayed Molly Devoy, and she turned to go her way home, feeling comforted and relieved. As she passed towards the door, she fell in with Rody, whose conference with Mat had ended, and who was returning to the neglected potato garden.

'Oh Rody! Rody! good evening to you!' said Molly. 'You should be the proud man to work for that lady of yours, Rody!'

'Deed! so I am, sure!' replied that hero, picking up the spade. Then he and the ducks resumed their labours simultaneously, and the leafy aisles of the Quaker's garden once more resounded to the thwacks of Rody's spade upon the stones, and the pleased ejaculations of his feathered companions.

* * * * *

Marion made her way indoors quickly to look if Father Paul was still sitting with Miss D'Arcy. He was gone. His chair had been put back in its place against the wall, and Gertrude was knitting in the window-sill with her lesson books. Miss D'Arcy was knitting and dozing alternately, and the silence of the room was unbroken, save by the chirp of the crickets and the ticking of the clock on the chimney-piece. The afternoon sun—it was close on six o'clock—filled the whole room with a mellow soft light. Thousands of golden mites were dancing in the air over Gertrude's head. Miss D'Arcy's face was in shadow, and her eyes were closed, but the top of her lace cap caught the lowest edge of the long shaft of tremulous yellow ether. Everything

was at peace. The parrot drowsed on his perch ; the turf fire seemed to have drawn a coverlet of white ashes over itself, and to have gone to sleep also. Gertrude raised her topaz-coloured eyes from her book for a second, her lips continuing to mutter the formula which she was committing to memory, then dropped them again. Marion nodded to her, and closed the door quietly. Then she ran upstairs of her own room, took her hat and gloves, and slipping gently out of the hall door, passed down the steps, through the laurels, and out of the gate. A glance along the river path showed her she was unobserved. She cast a longing look at the weir, but did not dare to venture across it, not that she was afraid of falling over, but that some one might see her. Then she sped along the path to the Limerick bridge. This crossed, she met Father Collins returning from giving benediction at the convent. He was hot and tired, and had as little inclination to speak to her as she felt to speak to him. He took off his hat very formally. He was a pasty-faced young man of about six and twenty, fresh from Maynooth and full of importance, 'more airs than a bishop,' as his superior the parish priest tersely expressed it. He was a good fellow and hard-working, but, as young curates are apt to be, over-zealous and wanting snubbing and keeping down. Father Paul and Mary Johnston administered both these prescriptions, the first-named vicariously, the house-keeper persistently.

Marion soon reached the Chapel House, and, the door being open, walked straight into the dining-room, where Father Paul usually was to be found. He was there sure enough, seated at his writing-table, and busy over a big account-book. The drawers of his escritoire were all pulled open, papers were strewn on the table and the floor, and his reverence's spectacles were on the top of his head.

'Well !' he ejaculated, rather surprised by her appearance. 'Well, child !'

Marion sat down beside the desk. Her rapid walk had brought a light tinge of colour into her pale cheeks, and her eyes were brighter. Father Paul noticed this change, and inwardly thanked God.

'Father Paul, I want something. You know that creature, Molly Devoy. Yes? Well, she came to me to-day in great trouble. Her old mother is dying, and she is all alone by herself. The rest of her children are dead or in America, and she has nobody to do anything for her.'

'Poor soul! poor soul!'

'Yes, indeed! And you see, Father Paul, Molly has never seen her since she got married to Tony. Tony was her father's servant, and the match displeased her people. You are not listening to me!'

'Deed am I listening. Go on!' He had divined what was coming, and took a huge and noisy pinch of snuff.

'And so,' pursued Marion, 'she has never seen any of them since, and her mother is now so ill and so desolate. She has not had the priest, and you see it would be a good thing if poor Molly could go to her.'

'Who's hindering her, eh?'

'Oh, Father Paul, you know it is forty miles away by train, and then there is a car all the rest of the way to the Glen of Connor, and she would want—oh—eight or nine shillings at the least.'

'O-o-oh!' roared Father Paul, so loudly that Mary Johnston stuck her head in the door to see what could have happened. 'She'll stop where she is then. Where would you get eight or nine shillings for her? Every cadger in Barrettstown will be up to the Fir House if once they know you have such money as that to give away. O-o-o-oh! such cheek! such impudence! I haven't it!' he shouted louder and louder, 'and I have a cow to buy, and here is this builder billing and billing me. Not a copper! not a copper! Such *fantigues* and luxuries for the likes of that Devoy woman! Pooh!'

Marion remained silent for an instant or so, while Father Paul wound up with a noisy flourish of his red handkerchief. The colour had all died away now from her face, the light gone from her eyes. She sighed deeply. The old sensation of helplessness, of impotence, had returned to her, and with it the sense of injustice and revolt. She tried to speak but could not. Father Paul was right; she acquiesced in

that. He had other claims upon him for his money. Poor Molly! poor Molly! and the distressed face of her poor friend rose again before her eyes.

Father Paul looked sideways at Marion, and noting her depressed crushed look, relented at once.

'My little girl!' he said tenderly, 'what business have you troubling yourself with these creatures? Leave them alone. Let Molly Devoy get some of her friends to help her. What is she to you?'

She said nothing. Tears that were hardly for Molly were gathering in her eyes. She turned her head half away to avoid the anxious scrutiny he bent upon her.

'Marion, my child,' said Father Paul, and laid his hand on the shoulder next him; 'what is it that is troubling you these times?'

No answer—a mute movement of the head.

'Can I do nothing for you?'

Father Paul heaved a sigh that came from the very depths of his soul. He let fall his pen, and leaned back in his chair, as if deprived of all power or will over himself. Marion broke the silence by rising from her chair.

'I must go. Good-bye!' she said.

He lifted his shaggy eyebrows and looked at her earnestly and lovingly, sighed once more, then drew out a drawer of his writing-desk, in which a bunch of keys was hanging.

'Here's for your Molly,' he said gruffly, holding out his great thick hand. A half-sovereign was lying in the palm. She smiled faintly as she took the coin, gave him a friendly tap on the arm in token of acknowledgment, and without another word left.

Father Paul's accounts remained unnoticed before him for long enough. His reverence's thoughts were far away.

'I have myself to thank,' he muttered at last; 'to blame, I mean. God forgive me, indeed! I should have been more prudent. Oh dear, dear! Molly Devoy, in troth! Oh Lord! Lord! this world was right enough till you put women into it.' And then, having concluded with this his favourite aspiration, he shut the books and rang for Mary Johnston to give him his tea.

CHAPTER XXXIV

'Why should calamity be full of words?
Windy attorneys to their client woes,
Airy succeders of intestate joys,
Poor breathing orators of miseries!
Let them have scope; though what they do impart
Help nothing else—yet they do ease the heart.'

ON leaving Father Paul Marion paused for an instant in the road, meditating whether it was not too late to go and see Molly Devoy. It was a long mile and half to her cabin, and she thought it better to postpone her visit until the next morning. She felt unwilling to do this, remembering the state of grief and unrest in which poor Molly was. But the thought of the Dublin Road after dark, the difficulty of inducing Gertrude to accompany her—to go alone was out of the question—prevailed. She determined to despatch Rody with a message so discreetly worded as to convey at once the maximum of comfortable assurance to Molly, and the minimum of information to Rody himself, who was as great a magpie as Barrettstown contained.

She had just reached the upper bridge when she met Molly's owner, Tony Devoy himself, proceeding home from a day's work in the convent garden, and carrying his spade on his shoulder. Marion felt pleased to see him. She determined to send her message by him, and spare Rody the trouble, so she stopped Tony just as he was putting his hand to his hat in salutation to herself. Tony's coat and waistcoat were unbuttoned, and he looked very tired and dishevelled. It was Friday, and five days' growth of blue-black stubble

darkened his countenance. Any one in Barretts town could tell the day of the week by the growth of the mens' beards, for they were shaved only on Sundays. He had been at work since eight, and his dinner had consisted of a pocketful of cold and very bad potatoes, and a fragment of a sodden griddle cake that he had taken with him. On his way home he had been unable to withstand the craving for stimulant, and had taken half a glass of Peter Quin's worst whisky—a poisonous heady compound—which was responsible for the extraordinary grin with which he greeted Miss Mauleverer's 'Tony!' and the loudness of the '*Sonuh*er to your ladyship!' with which he replied to her evident interrogation.

'Thank you!' she replied. 'Tony, please say to Molly that I am coming to see her to-morrow early, very early—do you hear?'

'Yes, miss, I do!' replied Tony, all in one mouthful, and with intense earnestness.

'And, Tony, just tell her not to trouble herself; I have settled all that she wants.' She looked at him dubiously for an instant. 'You will not forget that? All that she wants,' she repeated, gazing impressively at Tony's black muzzle.

'God reward you accordin', my darlin' lady! No fear dat I will disremember it, never fear.'

Tony took off his ragged old cap, and made her a bow that Tighe O'Malley could never have equalled; after which, lifting his feet heavily and slowly in the dust, he continued his way home.

Nine o'clock next morning saw Miss Mauleverer on her way to Molly Devoy's. It was a beautiful morning. A glistening perfumed air met her, lifted the little curls on her temples, and kissed her below them, then hurried to the great chestnuts that overhung the demesne wall and strewed clouds of pink blossoms at her feet as she passed. The hawthorn filled the air with its bitter-sweet odour; the tall feathered grasses nodded, and over their graceful heads the hemlock raised its starlike disks of white blossoms. Every bud swelled and strove into life and light, every bank and

hedge was clad in a sun-woven vesture, so lavish, tender-hued, and fragrant, that the air was laden with the odour, and under the high walls, where there was no current of air passing, it was nearly oppressive. The sky was serenely clear ; here and there a soft-bosomed round cloudlet, almost entirely white, sailed placidly high over the tree-tops, and cast its shadow into the Barrettwater among the tints of the fresh leaves that were already mirrored there. Presently Marion left the high-road that ran by Barrettstown demesne, and took a cross path which brought her out on the bog. Once away from the hedge and its thickets of hawthorn and bramble, into which the rabbits scuffled at her approach, she paused for a minute, for she had been walking fast. The broad tracts of the Mountstuart Bog extended before her, and a fresh moist air blew towards her and cooled her face. She could see far off on the other side of Barrettwater the hill behind which lay Lambert's Castle and the long meandering track of the Limerick Road, as it wound round the hill and out of sight towards the south-west. The mountains in the distance were a clear amethystine purple, and stood out sharp and distinct in the morning air, which had been fresh-washed and purified by heavy rain during the night. A bluish translucent vapour rose here and there on the wide red field of the bog ; the pools of water in the cuttings were black or vivid silver as the light reached them or not. A few people were moving here and there among the turf-stacks. A flock of green plover, whistling as they rose, mounted into mid-air and flapped leisurely across, their pied bodies shimmering in the sun. A cur dog was barking and snapping after a flock of long-legged gray geese which had been turned out for the day to pick for their living in the sedges. Marion could just hear his yelps as the geese half flew, half ran before him. Then a woman with a scarlet handkerchief tied on her head called him in, and the geese relaxed their pace into their usual decorous march. She did not stand long, but keeping the Dublin Road on her right hand, hastened along by a path well known to her. It was wetter than she had expected ; all the little runnels were overflowing, but Marion knew how

to deal with it. She bent down the tufts of sedges with her feet, and stepping on the branches of the bog myrtle and the furze, forced them to serve as stepping-stones for her.

After half an hour she came to Molly's dwelling-place—a round-shaped queer cabin with a very low door, out of which the turf-smoke was issuing in a pale blue cloud. A sort of sunk basin about six or more square feet in extent lay before the door. This was filled with manure and turf-ashes, all submerged in black ooze, on the top of which an iridescent scum was floating. Two small black and white pigs, prematurely intelligent and active of appearance, were rooting busily in this. As Marion approached, picking her steps warily by the side of this Malebolge, they gave up rooting, stared at her for a moment, then came close to her, snuffing and grunting hungrily, and finally dashed into the house simultaneously as though each was eager to be the first to announce her arrival. Molly was out in a moment, the perennial baby as usual in possession, and this time a troop of children clinging about her skirts.

'Miss Marion, darling! God bless you! 'tis yourself has the welcome foot this morning. Step in, miss, *acora*.'

Marion bent her tall figure, and passed in under the low door, carefully avoiding collision with a reaping-hook which was stuck in the interstices of the wall.

'Oh dear! wait a minute, miss,' cried Molly, and she ran to the fire and lifted off the turf which was smoking and dispersing its acrid fumes through the cabin. The chimney was too wide at the bottom, and there was a down-draught which swept dust and smoke in one blinding cloud back into the faces of the occupants of the place. Everything was marked by it. Some holy pictures stuck on the walls were all tan-coloured. Molly's face, young as she was, was already beginning to get the baked potato colour of the old women. The children, whose height no doubt had to do with the fact, were not yet affected as to eyes or skin by the irritating and almost ever-present fumes of the not too well-dried turf.

The fresh sods having been hospitably removed by

Molly, the smoke cleared off a little, and Miss Mauleverer, her eyes smarting, was able to look round her. The first thing she observed was the disappearance of her two heralds the pigs, young Tony and young Molly beating them out with furze branches. The ducks and chickens had retired discreetly to the end of the turf-stack close by the fire, where their bead-like eyes glistened in the darkness. The cat vacated her place and mounted into a hole in the wall, high up, where Molly placed such stores as she desired to keep out of reach of the children's hands. A half loaf of stale bread and a yellow bowl of sugar occupied this hole now, and beside these the cat took up her position. There was another hole beside the chimney, a warm quarter, which was the nest for such of the poultry as were in the habit of laying, and in this a hen was sitting. She too was watching everything that went on below, turning her head knowingly and suspiciously from side to side.

'Be seated, I pray you, miss,' said Molly, advancing her the one chair, and at the same time deftly wiping it with her apron.

Marion sat down, and Molly crouched down, Irish-fashion, in a heap on the floor. 'You got the message that I sent last night by Tony,' she said, fixing her eyes intensely on Molly. 'Yes? Well, Molly, I must ask you not to allow any one to know about this. Now, do you understand?' She handed over the bit of gold as she spoke. Molly received it with reverence, as if it had been something sacramental.

'Miss Marion!' she uttered and no more, so amazed was she.

'Now that is it, and you can get ready to go as soon as you like, Molly.' Miss Mauleverer spoke hastily in order to stop the tide of thanks she saw rising and swelling to Molly's lips. 'You will take the baby with you, and who will see to Tony and the children?'

'Oh!' cried Molly, heedless of everything, 'May God's blessing and my blessing follow you all over the world while you live, my lady! It is you that is good to the poor.'

Marion rose from her chair. 'Never mind that, but

remember that no one is to know. And when do you go ?'

'Sure I can go now, this minute,' replied Molly, rising off the floor quite lightly and easily with a curious twist of her body. 'I can call in to the neighbour's cottage as I go to the train, and Esther or Honor Kelly will slip down and see what they're doing here. Molly and Tony can keep turf to the fire, and they know where to get the potatoes to have supper ready for their dada.'

This was simplicity itself. Miss Mauleverer thought as she looked round the cabin that surely there could not be very much to be done there. There was no bed ; a heap of heather branches and dry turf covered with sacks was the sleeping-place of the whole Devoy tribe. One large pot and an iron kettle formed the cooking apparatus. There were some old jam pots and a cracked mug or two laid carefully away in holes in the wall. A tin gallon can, picked up in the street, where some housekeeper had cast it out, with rags drawn expertly through the holes, served to carry water or buttermilk, when the latter luxury was to be had, or offal begged in the town for the pigs. There was no table ; a little wooden bench seemed to serve in lieu, for one of the children was at this moment standing before the same eating a roasted potato. One chair, a box, and a kish—such was the plenishing of Tony Devoy's house, a house where the wolf was not merely at the door, but almost always inside it. They were invariably hungry, and the worst time was the summer, May, June, and July, 'hungry July,' in popular parlance, when last year's potatoes are all gone, or bad, and this year's new ones are not yet fit to dig, and when credit is hard to be got, until people know what the harvest is going to be like. Molly, as she said herself, 'being well come, could not stomach to beg.' However Tony was popular, and she had a few good friends of her own in the town, among these being Mrs. Cadogan and her daughter Mary. They pitied her with her 'long' family ; and knowing the various kinds of poor people and their wants, and the times and seasons of the same, lent a kindly helping hand, and bridged over many bad bits of road in the Devoy's'

life journey. Even Mrs. Quin, grasping and hard as she was, having children of her own, was still human, and gave credit for seed potatoes in early spring and for a little Indian meal in 'hungry July.' In return for this condescension, it being well known that she loved a hare or a salmon, Tony had friends who were able to oblige him and his patroness in the direction either of Barrettwater or O'Malley's coverts. The system of making presents was almost Oriental. The bank manager, in whose hands the power of renewing bills was vested, received turkeys, geese, lumps of fresh butter, and chickens in such quantities that his wife did not know what to do with them. She did not, however, rebel against them as did the wife of the doctor, who would infinitely have preferred that her husband received a cash payment for attending a fever or other case, in lieu of a 'compliment' of a load of turf, or half a load of hay, or a barrel or two of oats, which was the form of settlement the farmers preferred to adopt. Mrs. Doctor Daly, as she liked to be called, was anything but content with these compliments, and was, if possible, more discontented with those sent to the bank manager. He had a good salary, she complained, and it was an injustice that he should be trafficking with the people in that way. No one paid any attention to her discontent. She habitually found everything wrong, and she hated the town and the people. No one sympathised with her or showed her any attention save Father Paul; he listened to her without hearing her, and he pitied her poverty and ill-health. Molly Devoy was from some points of view better off than the doctor's wife. She lived a more real life. She had society and friends, and stood on her two feet in a definite manner, not, like the doctor's wife, pulled out of her equilibrium by a shred rope of dignity.

Marion was just moving to go when a loud proclamation from the nest in the chimney made itself heard, and out flew the hen, her feathers all ruffled, and clucking vigorously.

'There!' said Molly, dropping her bundle, and jumping on top of the bench. 'She do lay a beautiful egg, dat speckle hen do, Miss Maulever, miss! I'll make so bold as offer it to you for your own breakfast, miss.'

Marion was about to decline the present which Molly was handing to her. 'The Fir House hens are all laying, Molly, thank you,' she said. But as she spoke, the thought occurred to her that it would please her friend, so she took the egg and put it in her pocket.

'Tony,' she said, 'come for sour milk to-night to Kitty Macan. They are churning at Chapel House, and Rody brings more than we want. Good-bye, Molly !' and followed by the prayers and thanks of the tribe, she once more picked her way through the 'street,' as the space before the cabin door was called, and retook her way along the edge of the bog home. It was more difficult walking than the high-road, but the same indefinable instinct now, as when she came out, made her choose it in preference. Her task was done now, and little by little the fit of activity and interest died away, and the old sore feeling came back to her instead. She almost forgot Molly and her troubles and her own sympathy with them. Her eyes, in spite of herself, fixed themselves on the hill that hid Lambert's Castle, and at one point of the road, where an open in the trees allowed Barrettstown Castle to be seen, she climbed a hillock of moss and peat, and looked across the intervening extent of park and plantations, to where the gray plastered walls rose above the blackish belts of evergreens. The building had a gloomy deserted look ; the windows were all shuttered, the flagstaff bare. A sudden fancy entered her mind to explore the demesne, to go across the river some night after dark and ramble through the woods. There was an easy way of getting in by the broken wall at Chapel House ; if not there, she knew the ford at the heronry, or she could cross by the weir. If Godfrey could do it, she could—and she would.

At this juncture a cart made itself heard approaching in the distance, and she swung herself down off the hillock, and picking out a thick tuft of gorse, seated herself behind it to let the travellers go their way without seeing her. The gorse bush was all a yellow blaze. She pulled down one branch to the level of her face, touching it gingerly, and smelt the heavy aromatic incense of its bloom.

'Next year,' breathed she, 'when all these flowers are

dead and new ones take their place, how will it be with me? Oh, to be dead would be the best, far the best!' She let go the branch, and pressed both hands to her head, moaning almost with mingled pain and anger.

Something startled her; something or somebody was approaching. She leapt to her feet, and turned to face the intruder, to find herself confronted by Mary Cadogan's heavy if amiable face. She carried a book under one arm, and was evidently as much astonished at Miss Mauleverer's appearance as the last-named was at hers.

'How did you come?' asked Marion. 'Were you in the cart?'

'I was,' returned she. 'I took a fancy in my head this morning to come out here to this part of the bog, and to get up on top of that hill yonder out of sight of people, for I am sick of everybody, just to enjoy the air and the country, and the quiet—and myself,' she added with a short laugh.

'Your wish was not a very extravagant one, Mary Cadogan, yet it was denied you, for, you see, you meet me here, and I do not flatter myself that I escape the fate of the rest of your fellow-beings.'

'Well, Miss Mauleverer, I certainly had not you in my mind's eye when I said I was sick of everybody. On the contrary, I was thinking only yesterday that it was full three months since last I saw you, even at mass; and for the rest, if you do not object, there is air enough for the two of us, and as for the country, it is wide enough to hold us both also.'

'Oh no, I do not object,' Miss Mauleverer replied, but not in the light tone of her companion, at whom she looked curiously, for she thought the gaiety of her manner rather forced. Something grim, almost despairing, betrayed itself below.

'The truth is,' said Mary Cadogan, 'we are creatures of the moment. When I left our place I was in so great a hurry to get away out into the green country as far from everybody as I could, that, would you believe me? I got old Thady Kelly to let me drive with him in his cart. The rusty wheel kept shrieking all the way—I thought it would

have sent me mad ; but it was quicker than walking, and so I endured it, so eager was I for an hour's solitude and quiet, and yet, can you think that possible ? when I came on you sitting here before me—so inconsistent and unstable am I—the first feeling in my mind was gladness—yes, a pleasure.'

'Well, thank you for saying so, replied Marion, 'for it is undoubtedly a compliment.'

'If you will take it as such,' continued the other in the same tone, but speaking even more rapidly ; 'but if you knew my mind and the state it is in, you would not be so clear about the compliment. I left home just now to escape other people, and though that is not more than an hour ago, it is more than probable that I am glad to meet you to escape myself.'

'Mary Cadogan,' exclaimed Miss Mauleverer, 'what is the matter with you ?'

'Nothing ! Oh, nothing is the matter with *me* ! I am no trouble to myself. It is not many people who can say as much.'

The other girl paused for a second thoughtfully. She knew that Mary Cadogan, as well as her mother, was sorely tried by her brother, who had been a medical student, and who was said to have been very dissipated, to be so still—Jim Cadogan, with whom Godfrey seemed to be mysteriously intimate. She only knew him by sight at the church. He went sometimes to mass to meet the people who came from outlying districts. She looked again at Mary Cadogan. Her eyes were swollen, black circles surrounded them, and she had a dazed look, though her face wore its ordinary expression of placidity—dulness, a hasty observer might style it—but she was not dull.

A sudden pity filled Marion.

'It is——' she stopped, unwilling to seem curious.

'Oh ! What can it be but the one thing ? It is a curse, oh my God, it is a horrible curse ! There am I and my mother—an old woman that ought to have peace—for three nights now neither of us have lain down for five minutes, fearing to leave him for fear he would lay hands

upon himself. He threatened us he would run out and jump into the river. I thought to-day I would have gone mad, so I got the chapel clerk Condry to come down and stop with him, so as to let me get away out of sight and sound of those horrors, if only for an hour.'

Marion shuddered from head to foot.

'I ought not to have mentioned such things to you,' cried Mary Cadogan bitterly. 'Why should people like you ever hear of the like? You are better not to know even that such things can exist. See, Miss Mauleverer, let us go up there round that hill to the lough. It will be an hour's walk; but that lough is so beautiful. I have not been there since last year, and I hear the flaggers are in bloom.'

'Yes,' assented Marion; and they set out together, right across the bog, preferring the direct way to the cart-track which the turf-cutters had made. They kept to the unfrequented portion of the bog, away from the cuttings, where a few people were working.

'You would want to have webbed feet for walking here,' observed Mary Cadogan. 'I have done wrong, Miss Mauleverer, to bring you this way. Set your feet upon the high places.'

The high places proved, however, to be just great accretions of wet sponge-like moss, which seemed to give the lie direct to the counsel, for water splashed and hissed out of each the moment their feet touched them. Mary Cadogan led the way, walking heavily and in silence, Marion followed apathetically. Both were silent and thoughtful. A fly now and again sprang to their ears and buzzed a message of some eternal import, some awful warning, sounded but not spoken and left unfinished always. Once or twice a wild bird rose almost from their very feet, and with a harsh cry flew out of sight, its bright feathers gleaming and shimmering in the distance. A flock of gray geese were wandering far from their abiding-place, crying as they went like the very spirit of the wilderness. Save these not a living thing was to be seen, not even an echo disturbed the air.

They rounded the hill at last, and the lough, which was merely a widening of the Barrettwater, not a mile and a half

broad, lay before them. A light gray cloud had for a moment veiled the sun, and the water gave back a curious purple reflection broken by masses of reeds and flags. Most of them were last year's, dead and dry, but the flags were an exquisite tender green, and young bulrushes, with soft white feathered tops, were pushing up among the old growth.

'Let us go down to the bank,' said Marion. 'I can see yellow and purple iris there near the boat-shed.'

The beach of the lough was strewn with a thick bed of broken reed stems, the deposit of years and years that had been washed back on shore by floods and winds; under this lay turf covered with all sorts of water plants and mosses. A little ripple stirred the surface of the lough, and broke the reflections, and a damp breath of air came up to them and cooled their faces pleasantly.

'Look at the boat lying on the bank. Whose is that?'

'O'Malley's, I suppose,' answered Mary Cadogan. 'No, it is Brown's from Lees Castle. I know it was borrowed from them one day to go troll for pike. There is nothing but pike in this lake, and they are killing the ducks: they take down the young ones. Mrs. Clifford, who has that little house down at the farthest end, was telling my mother she had lost a whole brood of her ducks this last week; but there are hundreds of wild ducks notwithstanding.'

'I mean to get out the boat,' said Marion, walking along to the place where it was lying. The fastening was easily managed. There was only one oar; it was enough to scull with, and a minute or two saw Mary Cadogan sitting in the stern and Miss Mauleverer poling the little skiff out through the reeds into the open. The sun shone out again now brilliantly, and turned the whole lough into a sheet of burnished silver. Silent as it had been while they remained on shore, now that they had encroached upon the watery domain innumerable sounds and tokens of protest made themselves heard. The bald coots chattered and swam in and out fussily among the cover. But the wild ducks lay in the water, among the graceful stems of their reed homes, or crouched on the sandy edges of the

shore, drowsy yet watchful. As soon as the sound of the boat, the echo of the voices, reached them, they became alert at once, and now and again there went out from a bird a long quavering cry, that was caught up here and there, and repeated and passed on to the farthest outposts of the lake and swamp; a sort of vibration full of a weird music and melancholy, instinct with sympathy; a note of warning of the danger, that held all the feathered creatures in one bond.

'Listen to that!' said Marion, impressed, standing still. 'Is it not beautiful? They don't rise, because they see no gun with us, but they are watching us.'

'It is beautiful indeed!' said Mary Cadogan. 'It is so much so that I don't care even to think of the poets' descriptions of lake scenery. Everything they have said is inadequate; nothing satisfies but just one's senses. If it were not that I take pleasure in such scenes and occasions as this, I would kill myself. Human beings are too bad, too vile!'

'They are not all that,' said Marion absently. She was wondering to herself if Chichele had seen this lough, if his eyes had rested on this wild lovely scene.

'They are!' asseverated Mary Cadogan. 'All men are bad. I do not believe there is an exception. Tell me of one in the town who does not drink—you know there is not one.'

'I don't know much about the town,' replied Marion shocked; 'but Peter Quin, is he not sober?'

'Peter Quin may be an exception, but if he is, it is because he sees his advantage in keeping sober. Everybody else drinks. It is well known that he takes advantage of them when they have taken drink. So, you see, it is only 'cuteness that keeps him from drinking. No, there is not a man in Barrettstown who is different from the others, and it is the same everywhere else. Men are bad, and they can be, they may—it makes no difference to *them*. It all falls on the women. Look at my mother—see the awful life she had until she buried my father. Then she sent James to college—indeed, poor woman, I think she did that because Peter Quin sent his son George—and

then to Dublin, and she paid money over and over for his debts, and once he ran away and enlisted, and she bought him out. He has cost her nine hundred pounds in all. And what has she after it all? There he is now just able for nothing. He will do nothing in the shop. He despises business; he looks down upon it. And he has delirium tremens again.'

'He must be very wicked!' said the listener under her breath.

'No, indeed, he is not wicked,' Mary Cadogan contradicted vehemently, 'on the contrary! I think it is that he is too simple, too easily led. I have a great pity for him, and you see, he is not like those other men. Very little upsets him, very little will make him quite mad. He knows that himself.'

Marion was bewildered. 'Then why does he take even a little?'

'Oh, he can't help it. Men are not like women; it is no use judging them. I used to think that too, but now I see my mother is right. It is no good to expect anything of a man. They'll do what they like, and it is not to please you that they will give up anything; that is, for women. It is we who have to make sacrifices and to bear everything. Jim, you see, had always my mother's money at his back—so then, of course, he need not care.'

'Still, they are not all alike! I heard Father Conroy say once to some one—the doctor, I think—that Peter Quin said his son never asked him for money, that he did not spend half his allowance in Dublin, and that he never ran into debt.'

'That is very well for Peter Quin; but George Quin does not like to spend any money at all, so it is just to please himself. It is not goodness that makes him take care of his money. Jim says George Quin would take every drink that could be had from the other fellows, and never offer one of them a treat in return. He can drink when he gets it for nothing just as well as anybody else. He is the meanest creature living, George Quin!'

'Mary Cadogan! Father Conroy and Father Collins

do not drink, and they are men. Do you say they are too mean or too cunning?’

‘Oh, of course not! They are priests. Priests are not to be compared with other men. They are obliged to be good, and,’ she added, ‘they have the grace of God; and you know it is nonsense to expect men to live as priests live. All men are alike except priests—all bad, all weak. Those who succeed are like George Quin—mean, selfish fellows!’ Mary Cadogan wound up doggedly.

Miss Mauleverer felt at once puzzled and disgusted. ‘Mary Ahearne spoke almost as you do,’ she said.

‘Yes,’ replied the other, ‘but she went into the convent. I could not go into a convent. I could not be a nun. The world interests me though it disgusts me. She took no interest in this world. I love to look at the scene whatever it is that is before me, and forget everything else. If I were a nun that would be a sin. I do not wish to renounce the world, and above all, books. I could give up anything but reading. It was Goethe who thanked God for making the world so beautiful. He need not, I think, for were it not beautiful who could endure it? We should thank Goethe for his books. They are beautiful. And he was not obliged to write them—they are a gift.’

Mary Cadogan’s head, although she had more instruction than most of the other inhabitants of Barretts town, was as wrong as that of anybody else. They were all melancholy and depressed, like her they led joyless and uninformed lives. Their ignorance was something marvellous. Mary Cadogan in this respect was somewhat better. She read Carlyle, her brother procured her the books from a student of Queen’s College; whether she understood them or not is matter of conjecture; but she was proud of her singularity in reading such books. She was good and religious, but she believed rather in evil than in good. Most people were bad according to her. With regard to her employees and the poor people about, she believed them all to be dishonest, and expected nothing else from them. The great thing was to keep temptation out of their way. She locked up everything, and if by chance she omitted this

precaution, took any deficit as a matter of course. 'They are all rogues, poor things; the only thing is to treat them as such.' One and all suffered from the same complaint—not one lived his or her life really, or saw it as it was actually. All their heads were in the clouds. They gorged their imaginations with poetry, with legends—they saw nothing as it was, but always through some iridescent-tinted medium. So long as they were young, poetry sufficed them, or, as in many cases, the writing of poetry; after five and twenty or thirty—and previous to this age many entered convents and monasteries—whisky supplied its place. Nevertheless there were some practical-minded people in Barretts town—Peter Quin was one, Molly Devoy another; there had been others, but they had mostly emigrated: the beggars were all poets or philosophers, generally both. Their waking moments, when not tormented by hunger, were spent in heaven. Every one lived in a dream, whether of the next world or of a revolution. Sometimes they knew it, for most had their moments of awakening, but they were only moments: they found themselves in such a minority and in such chilly solitude that they speedily returned to the conventional order of things. Effort was bootless, useless; submission to everything, to everybody, was the only safe course. Fatalism, in a word, expressed their attitude to life.

Some one who had travelled into this strange inner world of rural Ireland declared that in their religion God and the devil were convertible terms. He was nearer the truth than he knew.

'Is not the beauty of the world a gift?' asked Miss Mauleverer. She was poling the boat through a great bed of bulrushes now. The sharp prow clove its way through the close growth of flexile stems, each bent gracefully before them, and a strange weird sound filled the air as they rose and closed up their ranks again behind the boat. They could see nothing but the sky overhead, and the procession of a multitude of slim green wands rising in due order in their wake.

'A gift!' echoed Mary Cadogan, with a bitter intensity of tone. 'It would not be a world to me without beauty.

What less could He do for us? Look at all the other things that God has made that are curses to us and nothing else. This is the only thing that is not harmful.'

But her bitter desponding voice fell on the empty air. It was another, and a different voice, that filled Marion's ears. She could hear its well-known tones above the plash of the ripples, above the cries of the wild birds. It was not the dazzling sheen of the sun upon the water that seemed for an instant to blind her, that made her let go her oar and press both hands over her eyes. It was that for one instant Chichele's face rose before her, unbidden, unsought; that for once she saw him as his real self. For, by dint of trying to build up a picture of his image in her own mind, she had confused and almost destroyed her memory of him, so much so that sometimes she felt herself in doubt that she could recognise him if she were to meet him. No wonder that Mary Cadogan's plaint went unheard; she was in another world far removed from all sordid earthly cares. Her face seemed transfigured as though an inward light shone through it, her eyes gave back the brightness they received, and a gold haze seemed to be reflected from her jet-black hair.

The boat at last left the reeds, which rose up behind it, and closed their green ranks again just as though a gate had shut upon them. They were out in the open water now, gliding slowly in a burnished glittering sheet of silver.

'This is deep,' said Marion startled; 'I must scull. Change places with me, but be very careful.'

Mary Cadogan, now silent and more depressed than ever, obeyed her, and they were soon gliding in the current, which became a little swifter now. Ere long the sound of water breaking over stones made itself heard. Marion turned her boat at once, and retraced their way towards the landing-place.

'Miss Mauleverer,' said Mary Cadogan timidly, 'I ask your pardon for what I have said. I know it was wrong, but indeed I feel bitter sometimes. It is a sin to say God created such a thing as a curse.'

'Well,' observed Marion, 'as for what you say about curses, you know that Father Conroy is never tired of say

ing that it is the women who spoil this world, Mary Cadogan. Perhaps, after all, it is the women who spoil the men. It is the women who bring them up, you know.'

'God knows! I cannot tell—I cannot understand it. There is Jim—we did all we could—he might be an army surgeon now, or in any position he liked, but he had no taste for getting on in the world; and, as for drinking, he is no worse than the Capel men, or Luke Ahearne, or the Kellys, or any other of the young men.'

'I know none of them. Please do not speak of them,' said Marion with a shiver. The bitterness of the girl's voice and look recalled to her the visit she had paid to Mary Ahearne at Lambert's Castle, Luke's behaviour, and Honor Quin's conversation on the way home. Honor Quin took much the same view of the young men of the district, only from a different standpoint. Marion did not care, personally, though it was unpleasant to hear of such a wretched state of things. She did feel, however, some curiosity as to these beings, and contrasted them in her own mind with an ideal which of late had occupied it only too fully.

Mary Cadogan heaved a deep sigh.

'It is well for you, Miss Mauleverer,' she said. 'You have a nice life. No one interferes with you, and you can do what you like. It is different with us. Honor Quin, too—she can live how she likes. Look at Mary Ahearne—only for God himself and Father Conroy she would have been forced to marry Harry Capel, and she hated him. I don't think she was so fond of the convent at all, but it was the only way she could escape marrying; and then Margaret her sister, she had to take him instead. It is the same with us all, poor or not. We once had a servant, a very pretty nice young girl, only seventeen. Dear! I never was so sorry for any one. One evening we were kept waiting for tea, and at last after calling and calling I went out backwards to the kitchen, and there was this girl, Peggy Curtin, with her apron over her head, crying and leaning up against the wall. Her mother was there—had come down for her, if you please, to go off that minute to be married to an old

fellow who had a good farm somewhere away out beyond Castle Island. She had never heard his name even; but faith, he had seen her at mass, and just sent a message to her father. It was a good match, and they lost no time taking up his offer. Well, Peggy she cried and went on her knees, and my mother did all she could with old Mrs. Curtin, to no purpose. No, she said the men were waiting above in the church, and the priest, and so they pulled poor little Peggy off from us, and she was married that same evening and taken off home to the old man. I never was so disgusted with anything at all as that. Now I am not surprised at anything. Shortly it will be the same thing with myself.'

'What!' exclaimed Miss Mauleverer. She had just lifted the oar out of the water, and remained with it poised in her hand.

'Yes; my mother is never done at me. She tells me she would rather see me dead than to have me an old maid. So I must take some one.'

'Take some one?'

'Yes; I get messages every Shrove this long time back. I don't care to marry a farmer, or I could have married—well, a good ten or twelve times, and that is not boasting. You see,'—Mary Cadogan added this hastily and as if in response to an expression of candid surprise in Miss Mauleverer's face—'she can give me seven hundred pounds.'

'If you don't want to marry, if you think so ill of men, why do you? why need you?'

'She is set upon it,' sighed Mary Cadogan, 'and, you see, Jim has gone against her, and Robert and Gerald—they are dead—did the same, and my father too. So now I must please her anyhow; but it won't be pleasing to myself.'

Miss Mauleverer turned right round and looked at the girl, as if to see if she could be in her right mind. Mary Cadogan's face gave no sign of her being distraught; it expressed, as usual, hopeless resignation, seeming only rather more overcast and sad than usual. Marion felt profoundly uncomfortable and disgusted. She had dropped from her

higher to an under world too suddenly, and the sensation was repugnant to her. Had Mary Cadogan complained or expressed a wish for sympathy it would have been different. But she did not ; she simply recited her story in a matter-of-fact uncomplaining way. She probably would have been astonished, if not indeed offended, if she were told that she needed pity. She expected nothing from anybody. She firmly believed that what she said was true—not merely of Barrettstown, but of the world. She was a kind-hearted, unselfish girl, pious and industrious, truthful and honest, so for that matter were most, almost all, of the other women, but their influence, like hers, was absolutely negative—nor does it take much thinking to see wherefore ; there was more soundness in the poorest, the most helpless Fenian, there was more to be hoped for from him, than from whole communities of such as Mary Cadogan.

They drew the boat up into its place now ; and Marion, who felt chilled and saddened by what she had heard, left her companion and took her way home by another road.

CHAPTER XXXV

‘There is surely no greater wisdom than well to time beginnings and onsets of things. Dangers are no more light if they once seem light ; and more dangers have deceived men than forced them. . . . The ripeness or unripeness of the occasion must ever be well weighed.’

JUNE came and went in a yellow blaze of furze blossom, and July followed—a hot and thirsty July, marked by sultry heat and fierce thunderstorms followed by drenching rain, which the parched fields sucked up eagerly. This swelled out the turnips, if it laid the oats, and weighted the mangolds, if it rotted the hay of the always behindhand farmer. So far well, or fairly well, but after the rain was absorbed by the ground and given back at the sun’s mandate, the critical time of the year was yet to come, the days of terror to the country people, days at once hot and chilly, when you never saw the sun, nor felt a drop of wholesome cleansing rain, when the air was hard to breathe as though it were scarce, when you could not see above ten rods off, and all the earth and its growth smelled strong and rank. The old people shook their heads and talked of the cholera time twenty years back. Something was abroad, was in the air, and once the mists cleared off they all knew it. Any one who had a nose could tell it.

The Disease!!

Every potato field said the name aloud in language that there was no mistaking. Three hot foggy days had sufficed to do it. The broad ridges and furrows of the strong farmers, the lazy beds and drills of the cotters, all told the

appointed and the hour named by his young master. Then Godfrey would disappear perhaps for twenty-four hours or longer, Marion and Gertrude alone knowing of his absence. Miss D'Arcy would ask for Godfrey, send Kitty or Gertrude in quest of him, and then forget all about their mission and the object of it. Absorbed and unhappy as Marion was, she knew what was going on. Kitty Macan's mysterious allusions did not escape her. She could not understand what the old woman meant, with her talk about Barretts-town Castle and future grandeur and the Fenians all mixed up together. She knew of Godfrey's nocturnal excursions, and lived in continual fear for his safety. There came a day at last when reports of an imminent rising having reached her ears, she was so filled with terror she could endure no more, and she ran off to Chapel House to Father Paul, to consult with him how Godfrey could be kept from rushing into danger.

Father Paul was in a very perturbed and bewildered state of mind. He was sitting now in one of his uncomfortable horsehair-covered chairs, resting himself after a promenade up and down that had lasted nearly two hours. He was tired physically, and felt worn and exhausted mentally as well. The cause of his perturbation was that by the Dublin mail, which had been now some hours delivered, he had received a letter from Chichele Ansdale, a friendly courteous note—there was nothing in that, but he had enclosed with it a letter addressed in a full distinct hand to Miss Mauleverer, and had asked him, Father Conroy, to kindly hand it to the same person! His reverence nearly had a fit. He was at once so shocked, so angry, so pleased, and so perplexed. He groaned, he beat his forehead, he took snuff by the ounce, he buttoned and unbuttoned his old cassock, he flung off his biretta and put it on again; finally he stuffed Chichele's letter to himself into one drawer of his *escritoire*, and the letter addressed to his young relative into another, and at last, in sheer misery and tribulation, he fished his breviary out of the pocket of his cassock, and began to read his office aloud. After ten minutes he gave that up also, and folding his long lean old arms, relapsed

into the perplexed sea of conflicting emotion into which the young man's letter had thrown him.

'Can it be? could it? Oh, dear God! that he knows the children's sad story, that he dares all and everything, that he is an honest man? Oh, guide me, Heaven! Send me right! His uncle is seriously ill—he must accompany him to Wildbad—only for that he would have been back here now. And he does not tell me where to write—I don't like that. No, no, I don't like that. I will not give Marion the letter, because if he has not told her his address, it looks—it looks, what does it look like? He will be Lord Ansdale when his uncle dies, and rich! Good he is, and well-meaning, I feel sure! Does he know the circumstances of their birth? Who could tell him? O'Malley, never. Shame would keep his mouth shut. He does not, cannot know! Oh Lord, direct me! Direct me, Blessed Mother! I will not give the child that letter! Not yet—oh! not yet. ()-o-o-oh me! How pale and sad the creature looked yesterday. My heart will break—what am I to do—to do? Eh? who is it? Come in, yes! Yes, come in.'

The door opened, and the very subject of his care and thoughts stood before him, flushed with her rapid walk, her eyes dilated, a pale pink flush mantling in her cheeks.

'Oh, Father Paul!' she began, 'I came to tell you something.' She sat down suddenly to get her breath, for she was panting between excitement and hurry.

He extended an arm on each side of his chair, and fixed his eyes on her, patient to all outward appearance—in reality anything else.

She hastily related her news, tearfully. Her imagination all the time picturing Godfrey leading a band of pikemen up to the English cannon.

Father Paul listened, perturbed still more, but not to the extent that she had expected, for he already knew that Godfrey was a Fenian. Honor Quin had informed him of this for dear spite's sake pure and simple, just as she had recounted to the nuns Marion's intercourse with the English gentleman, and done her best, happily without avail, to raise gossip and scandal. No one liked her, or thanked her, for

her news, Father Paul excepted. The old man was unable to perceive her ill-natured motive, and thought that a laudable intention had inspired her.

He had not attached much importance to the communication, for he had no great opinion of the seriousness of this new rebellion. He had been an eye-witness of the affair of '48, and he recollected the abortive, almost ridiculous, fiasco of those days. This had been followed by the emigration, and the great decrease in the population. There were too few people in the country now for any serious attempt at shaking off the foreign yoke. He thought it was all child's play, and he made the mistake, then common enough, of supposing that every one else would take the same view. He forgot the existence, if he indeed knew of it, of the people who fatten by such folly.

He listened to Marion's account with a composure which astounded her.

'Foolish child, foolish !'

'He is not a child, Godfrey is a young man ! Father Paul, could you not send him away to some place ?'

'Tis no use even to speak of that,' said his reverence, having recourse to his snuff-box. 'My child, over and over again I have begged him to accept Tighe O'Malley's offer, since he will not go to Dublin to college. Oh, dear Lord ! this is a poor case. There, he has been at college, and he leaves college, and he will go to nothing—he will do nothing—and now you come and tell me he is in this foolish mischief.'

He was not thinking of Godfrey in the least, but of Marion's white face and desponding eyes which urged him to leave her, lest he might be tempted to hand her the letter which was lying so close to her. It was hers, not his. It would make her happy, if only for the moment. But, as he said to himself, a long life lay before her, and this young man might never come back. His uncle might keep him for an indefinite time at the German baths. He would forget her ; in time she would forget him. But how sad she looked—the life all gone out of the child ! 'Heaven guide me !' he prayed. Then aloud, 'I will go this minute and

see Lethbridge. This minute will I go! Oh, but I am plagued! But I am worried!’

Then snatching the Carolina hat off its peg, he twisted himself out of the cassock and into the body coat, and started off without further delay.

He found Mr. Lethbridge, the sub-inspector, at home, and after a minute or two of delay, was shown into his presence.

Lethbridge was self-important and bumptious, but he was good-hearted, and he soon saw from the stiff and laboured circumlocutions of his visitor that something of importance was coming.

‘I had indeed something to say to you. ’Tis no great concern to be sure, one way or other, and yet——’ Father Paul looked at the sub-inspector, and met his black bright eyes fixed on him interrogatively; he went on with an effort.

‘That young lad—a young relative of mine, Mauleverer—he lives there above at the old Fir House, mill-house—I daresay you know it. A foolish, childish lad, he has never been away from home, never been to—to a university. Ah, Mr. Lethbridge, those English universities are a great improvement, a great help, to a young man. Poor Godfrey! what is he beside? Ah, well, I mean, I was speaking of something quite different entirely, I ask your pardon!’

Father Paul had rolled up his pocket-handkerchief, and was tapping his forehead all over with it.

‘He has been led away, Mr. Lethbridge—whether is it by keeping bad company, or reading story books, weary on them! or writing poetry, equally a curse, and one that is common to the young,—but he has been led away into this wild nonsense the young fellows are carrying on.’

‘The Fenian Conspiracy,’ supplied Lethbridge, with a smile. ‘Yes, Godfrey Mauleverer is a sworn member, and either is, or shortly will be, a “centre” himself. Oh yes! Father Conroy, we know all about that. That young relative of yours is steeped to the lips in treason.’

‘Treason!’ repeated Father Paul blankly. ‘Yes, I suppose it is treasonable—’tis a big word, sir, to put upon such nonsense.’

'May be, may be not. I did not invent it,' retorted Lethbridge tartly. 'All I know is, the penalty for much less than Mauleverer is doing is twenty years' penal servitude and hard labour.'

He looked at Father Conroy to see the effect of his words, and seeing it was sorry for having spoken them. The old man's jaw had dropped, and an ashy look had spread all over his face. He gasped once or twice, as if oppressed for air. Lethbridge was touched. He rang for water, and produced a bottle of whisky from a press in the wall.

'I am sorry to have alarmed you, Father Conroy, very sorry,' he said, 'but the fact is, that lad is one of the most energetic agents in the country. His example alone is powerful. Now, let me give you a taste of this'—he was pouring out some whisky into a glass—'and I will tell you something that will interest you. I am really glad you came to see me! Probably what I have to say will relieve your mind.' He briefly related Tighe's visit, his instructions, and expressed wishes.

'It is all very well for O'Malley,' added the sub-inspector, 'but he is not responsible—we are. I can't undertake, because this boy happens to be, ah—ah—a connection of his own, to allow him to go scot free. He is swearing in rebels every day. I had a letter from Limerick the other day, making inquiries about him, and it seems that he has been down there on Fenian business. Can't something be done by his friends?'

'Eh? yes, yes!' replied Father Paul. Marion's request that he would send Godfrey away recurred to his mind.

'I may as well tell you, Father Conroy, that the Government intend to cut this thing short before it goes any farther. Now, sir,'—he lowered his voice to a whisper—'if martial law is proclaimed here, which is very likely, all power and responsibility is at once taken out of my hands. The military officer in charge of the district will take over everything, and will be bound to act on the evidence before him. Now, we have evidence against

Godfrey Mauleverer sufficient to prove him steeped to the lips in treason. You know the penalty.'

Father Paul groaned, and moved his feet uneasily.

'This district is in a very bad state indeed,' went on Lethbridge. 'I can't say anything less for it. Father Conroy, do you know anything lately of the people at Lambert's Castle?'

'Eh, lately? They are all living not too happily together.'

'Luke Ahearne was down here this morning for a summons to Petty Sessions against his father for assault, and the father came in since like one demented, to take out a cross summons for breach of contract and refusal on the part of the son to maintain him and his wife, as it appears he is bound to do in return for getting the farm.'

'Oh, what a disgrace! what a disgrace! Those decent Ahearnes!'

'Disgrace!' repeated Lethbridge; 'but think of them all living in one house together! These marriage arrangements that they make in this part of the country are wretched, truly wretched, Father Conroy! In England or Scotland a farmer like Ahearne would keep no servants. His wife and daughters would do all the work of that farm—in fact, on a farm of that size, the daughters would go to service or to business. I hear now that Luke has to pay two guineas rent an acre all round for seventy acres of land. That's a hundred and forty pounds a year. Then he keeps a man at twelve pounds a year wages, a dairymaid at fourteen, and another girl at eight. That's thirty-two pounds a year—one hundred and seventy-two. Very well; does fifty pounds a year keep those servants? I doubt it.'

'Indeed, I doubt it too—tea and white bread and butter and meat every day they must have now. I remember when servants were grateful for buttermilk and potatoes.'

'Well, say fifty-two pounds a year. There's two hundred and twenty-four pounds a year, and put down, say another hundred, for the family's keep and horses and cost of working the farm. Three hundred and twenty-four—ay

more, you may be sure of it—per annum. Does Lambert's Castle bring in that? I wager they spend four hundred a year. Does it bring in three?'

'It does not—cannot, no!'

'And moreover, the capital the old people had is all gone to fortune off those young women. They ought to be at service, and that money ought to be put in the land.'

'It never goes into the land. Polly and Essie Capel are to be married off next Sunday, and the three hundred pounds their brother Harry got with that young girl Margaret Ahearne is just divided between them.'

'And then this money will go to fortune off their sisters-in-law, and so on.'

'Just so! A fortune can travel like that from one end of Cork county to the other. You see, Mr. Lethbridge, you say farmers' daughters in other places work or go to service. Now, sir, there is not a family man in Ireland that would allow his daughters to work. 'These people all, or nearly all, come of the old stock of Ireland. They were once on a time gentry. Take the Ahearnes, for example; there is an old castle on the Shannon belonged to an Ahearne, and so, you see, they don't like their women to work. They keep servants for them. They have a pride above it. The worst thing about it,' added Father Paul, quite simply, 'is, it is difficult to get any womenkind to work, because they all think, whether they are come of good blood or not, that they may demean themselves to work. So the servants, they just do as little as they can at all. You see, there is nothing here but land to live by. We have no trades, no manufactures, men must have farms of land to live, and their children must all share alike—girls and boys, they share the interest in it.'

'Well, let that be! Do you know that the Ahearnes will be out of Lambert's Castle next spring?'

Father Paul jumped. 'What do you tell me?'

'Yes. Peter Quin has bid a thousand down for the goodwill, and will pay, if Ahearne can lay down the thousand too, two pounds five an acre.'

'Peter Quin did that—went behind Luke Ahearne's back, and did that?' roared Father Conroy.

'He did; and he distrusted Marchmont; thought that he was maybe inclined to favour old Ahearne, so he just cleverly wrote to O'Malley in London, and offered the cheque by the next post.'

'And O'Malley accepted him, sir?'

'Oh! why not? Who'd refuse such a good offer?'

'Ahearne's to be put out of Lambert's Castle!' repeated Father Conroy, who was shocked and grieved by the news.

'Sh!' said Lethbridge, 'for your life don't speak of that, sir! I had it from the best authority.'

'Bless us! Mr. Lethbridge, there may be bloodshed for this. It is too awful! After poor Luke's match and all!'

'Bloodshed! What excuse have they for shooting O'Malley? The man is simply doing what he has a perfect right to do. The goodwill of the farm, or the fine, or whatever the thousand is offered for, is worth it. The value of anything is the price people are willing to pay for it.'

'Yes,' assented Father Conroy slowly; 'and then Peter Quin is only getting two per cent on that money in the bank. He might as well put it in land. But it is an un-neighbourly act, and an unchristian one too, to go behind an old friend and neighbour and trick him out of his little place and way of living.'

'Now, sir!' said a constable, putting his head in at the door.

Father Paul shook hands with the sub-inspector, and took his way home, saddened and dispirited.

* * * * *

Lethbridge's information was perfectly correct. Peter Quin was not content with the conversation he had held with Captain Marchmont, and had written to O'Malley in London. Tighe had just then a pressing need of ready money, and accepted Ahearne's offer of a cheque within three days. Peter Quin had money lying idle in the bank in Cork. Two per cent interest was nothing, and he could not fail to make more than that the following summer out

of Ahearne's good pasture fields by turning in a lot of young bullocks to fatten for the October fairs. He had two or three farms which he had obtained in much the same way, and which he found profitable and interesting investments. He loved land, and had inherited this taste, for his father had been tried for shooting at a neighbour who had attempted to dispossess him by some nefarious tricks, in which a fortune, in the shape of land, or rather a lease of land, was involved. The neighbour was his own father-in-law and Peter Quin's maternal grandfather, the evidence fell through, so there was no conviction, but Peter Quin, it was plain to see, *chassa de race*. He was now, having secured his main point, in jubilant spirits, and was debating warily how to arrange matters so that the Ahearnes might suspect nothing until the last moment, and also that their ruin might be so complete and crushing as almost to justify his own conduct. Peter Quin had a considerable eye for public opinion. It did not matter who or what were the people who would speak for him and take his part, so that there were a good number of them. If he were allowed to choose between the suffrages of Andy and Peggy Lehan, and perhaps a third social nonentity like these two beggars, and the esteem of Father Paul or the bank manager, Peter would have preferred the first on account of their numbers, but he would, nevertheless, have endeavoured to placate Father Paul in any way that he could, according to his understanding. There was a charity sermon announced for the Sunday following Father Paul's visit to the barrack, and a bishop from an eastern diocese was to preach it. The proceeds of the sermon were to be applied to reducing the debt on the church. The bishop arrived in due course, and Peter Quin having learned the time at which he was to leave Chapel House to visit the convent, planted himself on the route in a well-chosen place, nearly opposite the bank porch, and taking off his tall hat, went down on his knees, and in full sight of the town kissed the Episcopal ring. This was a good deal, but it was not all. At the collection, after the sermon, Peter Quin deposited on the plate in view of all the congregation ten filthy tobacco and turf-

scented one-pound notes. A ten-pound note would have produced no effect, two five-pound ditto might have been misapprehended, but ten notes spread out fan-wise there was no possibility of mistaking, and a huge effect was produced.

Miss D'Arcy, who had been wheeled to mass in her chair, with Marion and Gertrude—Godfrey had refused to accompany them—laid down a gold sovereign each. The Ahearnes subscribed liberally. Mrs. Ahearne senior gave one pound openly and one secretly, so much did she feel the need of prayers and spiritual aid. She was terribly broken and changed in appearance. Her gray hair had become snow white, and her freckled, once rosy face was now drawn and pale. Her daughter-in-law gave nothing. She had brought a sovereign with her to church, but Peter Quin's subscription had excited her jealousy and ill-temper, and she could not endure to appear on an equality, even in the matter of charity, with her mother-in-law. So she kept her sovereign, and greeted her husband's swaggering contribution of five pounds with an almost audible chuckle of derision. The other parishioners all laid down their subscriptions, and a goodly sum was made up. Kitty Macan had half a crown for the occasion. Lord Cork, with Peter, Andy, Peggy, Judy, and company, produced coppers, and bemoaned themselves duly. The bulk of the money was got, as a matter of course, in the upper part of the church, the sanctuary, where the doctors, for there were two others in outlying districts whose parish church this was, as well as Doctor Daly, sat, together with a couple of Catholic county families from remote distances, the strong farmers, the attorney, and a stray engineer, inspector, or some such bird of passage. All had trooped in dutifully. The bishop was something new to look at, and the sermon, a slightly stilted production, was also new and tolerably effective, though the younger members of the congregation were much distracted during its delivery by the wheeling and circling of a swallow, which had come in by an open window, and was careering wildly round the church. This might have been worse, however, for they all remembered the Sunday in harvest last year when a wasp stung the curate

while he was preaching at last mass, and even Father Paul had to laugh. Then, if it had been a much hotter day, the doors might have been open, and a flock of geese might have come in the way they did once, at the offertory of the mass, and march straight up to the very altar railing. Only that Mrs. Ahearne and Mrs. Kelly each got up and spread out her great blue cloak and just headed off the gander, you could not have told what the beasts would do next. The swallow was no matter at all compared with such dispensations as those.

After mass was over, to the intense relief of Father Conroy and his curate, both of whom had suffered much more from the heat than did the bishop—for it was a high mass, and the Barrettstown clerk and acolytes were by no means equal to the ceremonies—all the leading parishioners were invited to Chapel House, the money counted, the lists filled up, and each donor formally presented—a process which entailed kneeling down and kissing his ring—to the poor hungry bishop, who having ‘pontificated’ was still fasting.

Then came ‘sherry wine’ and Mary Johnston’s damp biscuits, and the ceremony was at an end.

Peter Quin, who had of course been present, and who had shown himself very cringing and humble of manner, contrived to walk down the road with some of his neighbours, who had moved on in advance, and cleverly placed himself by the bank porch as the manager was drawing near. Flaherty entered into conversation with him; while thus engaged the Ahearnes’ side car passed with the two women seated on one side, and Luke and his father on the driving side.

Peter took off his hat with a flourish. This was the opportunity he had been in wait for.

‘Fine respectable old family,’ he observed, with a grin to the manager. ‘Tis a great pity Luke do not take after his respectable father. Ah, sad, sad, so it is, to see youth go wilfully wrong!’

‘Hey?’ said the manager. He had some bills of Jimmy Grimes, the horse jobber, with Luke’s name on them, and it behoved him to be careful as to the characters of sureties.

Peter Quin had his ear now, and set to work to improve his opportunity. He fixed his little twinkling eyes on his companion's face, and made a gesture with one hand, as of drinking, then nodded, and shook his head as if in deep tribulation.

'Oh, sir, terrible, 'tis terrible, to see a decent father and mother's child goin' on as that young man is! Poor Betty Delanty, 'tis a bad use she put her fine fortune to—the crature! gam'lin' and drinkin' and bettin' and choppin' horses with Grimes and this or that one. That's not all. This is queer old night work they bees carrying on, and Luke, poor fool, deep in it, doesn't know the day he'll be arrested, now, sir. I'm told the Government is going to put out martial law on us. Ah, 'tis a great pity, so it is, a great pity entirely!'

'Oh ho!' said the manager, 'if that comes to the agent's ears, I fear 'tis a poor chance that his offer will be accepted for the lease.'

'Ah!' said Peter Quin, narrowly watching the expression of the manager's face as he spoke, 'they would hardly be so severe on the poor fellow as that—eh, do you think, sir?'

But the bank manager smelt his dinner at that moment, and cut short the conversation without ceremony. Peter Quin, whose own dinner also was ready, turned his steps homewards, well content with his achievements so far. He had only accomplished his work in part. There remained a great deal to be done. He had before him the congenial task of insidiously blackening Luke's character to every one, under guise of pitying his parents to some, or his wife to others, or himself again, as the bias of those whom he addressed might suggest.

After dinner, late in the afternoon, a small knot of townspeople were gathered on a sunny dike close by the cemetery wall. It was a favourite resort of some half-dozen of the elder members of that portion of the congregation who were provided with seats. These same seats were a heart-burning to the beggars, who found it an exertion to kneel or stand the whole time during the services. They comforted themselves with prognosticating purgatory for

the possessors of these luxuries. The members of the group were all smoking, and one or two were reading weekly Dublin papers, partly aloud, partly *sotto voce*. It was a time of great excitement. The talk on Fenianism naturally reflected the turn people's minds were taking. As a rule, the older the men were the more despondent and apathetic were they. They had seen other and older troubles; the legends of the great rebellion had come to them at first hand from participants. Their imaginations refused to entertain images of foreign assistance, even though it was a fact that an imperial yacht had visited Kingstown that summer, and busy rumour had spread wild and entrancing tales of the old allies once more stretching out a hand to the oppressed nation. But the yacht vanished, much as in the old days the fleet had done from Bantry Bay. She would return, it was promised, and in good company. Whatever the truth was, whether, as was said, the imperial visitor, had on examination discovered the unsubstantial and shadowy nature of the promised levies, or that he dissolved into laughter at the sight of the pikes and castaway muskets together with the commissariat of cold potatoes, a few people alone knew, and those kept the secret, but the eagles and bees declined the society of the gaunt wolf-dog and his congeners, and, shaking out her wings in scorn or sorrow, the beautiful vision departed for ever.

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Peter Quin selected a dry place, spread his red pocket-handkerchief, and sat down on it.

'Condy,' he said, addressing one near him, 'would you have a match?'

'Matches enough,' answered Condy, 'but I forgot to bring my bit of bacca with me, or I lost it in the chapel.'

'Pho, man, pho!' said Peter Quin eagerly. 'Here's bacca, plenty, for you,' and he handed over a black fragment to his neighbour, who received it not nearly so eagerly as it had been offered.

Peter Quin was no favourite, but he was powerful and rich, and was rising in the world. Therefore people were

beginning to be a little more afraid of him than they were of each other—and of everybody else.

The conversation was resumed then. Even such a comet as the bishop's visit and his charity sermon could not engross the men's minds for any appreciable time. The burning question was the Fenian rising—the air was thick with mysterious rumours; strangers had passed through the town recently; every one was excited, anxious, or perturbed. An old farmer with long elf locks of snowy hair falling over the collar of his gray frieze cut-away coat, sat a little apart from the group, but within earshot. His wrinkled lean face wore a mocking expression, and the bright spark-like glance of his keen little eyes followed each speaker's countenance in turn. He said little, but kept crooning the 'Shan van vocht' as a sort of running commentary on old Harry Capel's talk.

'The plan is dis, I tell you'—old Capel was speaking—'they will all rise one given night when the word comes, and in England as here, the barracks will be attacked and surprised, and the stores will be seized in Chester and in Portsmouth and Chatham all at once, and den, just hold dem till the Americans sends help or de French.'

'Ah!' jibed the old man, 'you do well to say till—till—when chickens get teeth.' He began to croon:

“ ‘ ‘ Sure the French are in the Bay,
They'll be here without delay,
And the Orange will decay;
They'll be here by break of day,
Says the Shan van vocht.”

Haw! haw! haw!' he laughed scornfully.

'Charlie de Courcy,' cried Capel, 'you have not a bit of spirit of a man in you.'

'Have I not den?' sputtered the singer, falling suddenly into a boiling rage. 'Come down there on that clean high-road, Harry Capel, and bring your bit of stick wit' you. I will show you if I have de old spirit of the De Courcys.'

'A match! a match!' shouted everybody. 'Harry Capel, stand up to him now!'

'You're as hot as pepper, De Courcy,' said Capel; 'but I say an' maintain you are not sympathisin' with us.'

This was an apology, and De Courcy accepted it gracefully.

'The soldiers are a good half of them sworn in,' went on Capel, 'and sure, that is half the battle.'

'Yes, sure!' echoed all the listeners save De Courcy, who was nicknamed the Thrush, and who sang on:

"Then what will the yeoman do?
Says the Shan van vocht,
What should the yeoman do,
But throw off the red and blue,
And swear that they'll be true
To the Shan van vocht."

Harry Capel,' he asked, stopping suddenly, 'will those soldiers be inside or out of those garrisons?'

'Sure, won't dey be where we are?' almost shouted the person addressed.

"And what colour will they wear?
Says the Shan van vocht."

De Courcy sang for all reply.

"What colour should be seen,
Where our fathers' homes have been,
But their own immortal green!
Says the Shan van vocht."

'Charlie de Courcy,' observed Peter Quin, raising his hand to command attention, 'your voice is beautiful and your song renowned. But, my good man, Harry Capel is discoursing of war, and to my mind song comes after war, and not before.'

'That is your own damnable ignorance, Peter Quin,' replied the singer equably. 'Did you never hear of "The Minstrel Boy"?—

"The Minstrel Boy to the wars is gone,"

he quavered.

Peter Quin was silenced, but old Capel took up the challenge.

'De Courcy, he *went* to the wars.'

" "His father's sword he has gi-i-i-i-rded on," "

sang the irrepressible Thrush with a tremendous *roulade*.

'How soon, Capel,' asked Peter Quin, 'do you expect this will be?'

'As soon as ever they gives the word. All is ready.'

Peter Quin knew more about that than he did, for he had distributed some hundredweights of suspicious parcels recently. He took off his hat and wiped his forehead with a red cotton handkerchief.

'There's a power of—of queer stuff hid in the ruins of Lambert's Castle above,' he observed, 'and why they store it there passes me. 'Tis too open, an' what's more, Luke's wife knows 'tis in it. I don't care for womenkind knowing too much.'

'Hoy! She knows 'tis there?'

'The way of it is this. That servant-girl Judy that was put away when the young madam came home—Judy she was making up a little hide for herself in the old ruins, feathers she had made her own of, near enough for a bed, and eggs, and butter, and a few trifling things like that servants always makes off wit'. And what but Betty Delanty tracks her in and catches her! Betty Delanty vowed her soul she would have in the constabulary man and charge her for robbery! Well, she had to drop that when Judy, my bold Judy, showed the muskets let in below the floors, and the mould to run bullets in, and the powder in the dry holes in the walls. So Judy was let away with her bits of things and depart in peace. And now it is Mat too that is leaving them, and the new wife has brought in all her own servants.'

'She is a great stag,' remarked old Capel bitterly; 'with all her fortune that fine boy is lost with her.'

'Ay so! true for you,' responded Quin. 'A girl nearer his own equals would have answered him better. This girl's from town; they are all too fine for us country people. If they have a name of a fortune they have requirements, sir. That takes it all.'

'She is curst, that woman,' continued Capel, 'curst! My son's wife she never sees her brother. He is not let to speak to one of his own; and for the father and mother, 'tis miserable the way they all live together.'

'Common scandal that is,' assented Peter, 'Luke is drinking all before him. He hates her, and yet he sides her against his father and mother. He says 'twas they made the match, and then let them do with what they get. It will end ill, I'm feared.'

His cunning little eyes travelled from face to face of the group, watching the effect of his deliberately-chosen words.

Meantime De Courcy while he was singing was watching Peter Quin. 'Say a good thing, Peter, and a good thing will happen. No one here wishes ill to Ahearnes.'

Peter Quin did not like the gaze of the Thrush's bright steel-gray eyes. He started, and became red.

'Oh, pho! good jewel! Man, no! not at all! Who would be thinking of such a thing?'

'I do not know,' returned the Thrush, never relaxing his gaze for an instant, and speaking very deliberately. 'There is people, Peter Quin, to whom an ill wind blows always good.'

'It is well,' said some one a little outside the circle, 'for that little girl of Ahearne's dat went into the convent; she is away now in a Dublin convent. It would kill her the shame of what is going on.'

'Two hundred and fifty she got for her share,' said another outsider. 'That was a good deal.'

'Catch the reverend mother be put off with less. Why should she take in that girl, and maintain and clothe and keep her, well or sick, for life for nothing?' This was from De Courcy.

'Ay, so,' agreed Peter Quin, who had recovered himself now. 'That reverend mother down there below, she is the cleverest lady in all Cork county. Oh Lord! but she could do anything, she have such a head of her own. Look at de grand convent she have built; and the ground, when she came there fifteen years ago with her ladies, that was a wet,

poor, rashy field. Look at it now! An' the hay she got off it this year—no such other crop in the barony!

'Deed! she must be a clever lady.'

'Clever!' echoed Quin. 'I would not care to sell her a horse, still less buy a cow from her. An' de house she keeps! Man, you can see your own features in every board of her floors; everything do shine like new shillings.'

Everybody had assumed an edified face, as became the recital of such *Acta Sanctorum*.

'There is not a bit of profit in *their* custom,' pursued Peter Quin. 'If you don't lose, you don't gain. I often tell that Lady Mother if other people in this town paid as low as she do I might shut up my place of business.'

'Tis all for the glory of God!' observed De Courcy.

'Oh yes!' said Quin; 'but that won't answer wit' Bulfin and Fay in Dublin, where I give my wholesale custom.'

'Priests and nuns,' said one of the outsiders, 'nuns and priests, dey has the best of it for heaven, and dey makes not too bad a hand of it here, either.'

'Did you hear what Condyl the car-driver at the hotel said to Father Collins one day? No? Well, he was driving Father Collins, and he came on the two nuns that were coming home from the poor school in the town, and 'twas raining. "Condyl!" said Father Collins, "you should offer the ladies a lift home out of the rain." Condyl he forgot where he was, and said he. "I will not, I will not, indeed! Bedad! I am none too fond of priests and nuns coming near my animals."'

Peter Quin, who related this anecdote, appeared to relish it hugely.

'Condyl put his foot in it, then,' said another townsman. 'He is simple, but Lord Cork did better than that. 'Tis he can give an answer betimes. Did you hear when old Mrs. Folliot, the rector's wife, stopped him on the road, and asked him was he so foolish as to be making a novena for the indulgence? And with other things, she said she saw written up in a church in Rome, "Fifty thousand years' indulgence for two Hail Mary's."—"Fifty thousand years!" roared Lord Cork, "and, ma'am," said he, "wasn't it a

great bargain? and no one askin' you to take it?" sez he, "an' you able to go farther on an' do better, maybe," sez he. Mrs. Folliot ran home dyin' with laughin'. She gave up trying for his soul after that.'

Old Capel was the only one who remained unmoved by this anecdote. He thought the conversation trifling and unworthy, and as soon as the hilarity had died away, returned to his fixed idea.

'You's all laughin' and grinnin'; wait and see if you are ready wan of these dark nights comin'. Why, I hardly take my clothes off at night now, I'm that sure of them calling for me to go out.'

Charlie de Courcy turned round and surveyed the speaker with a grin of derision on his lean countenance. Capel's earnest face and voice seemed to tickle his sense of the ludicrous in a manner that was not to be resisted. He went off in a peal of laughter, then springing to his feet with the agility of a goat, notwithstanding his seventy years, he made the company a bow, which included each and all, and without a word took his way down the sloping bank to the high-road.

A sort of wondering silence fell upon the assemblage for a minute.

'That old fellow is going doting,' exploded Capel, who was De Courcy's senior by a year. 'De Courcy!' he shouted after the old farmer's retreating figure. 'De Courcy! I say, you are a runagade!'

The person addressed turned round with a quick light spring. 'Eh!' he shouted back, lifting his stick slantwise above his head. One foot was advanced, clear of the ground. He was only waiting for a response to his 'eh!' a genuine war-cry, to charge like a thunderbolt.

'Oh Lord!' ejaculated Capel below his breath.

'Eh!' shouted De Courcy once more. Then his face relapsed into a wide grin that showed a magnificent set of snow-white teeth. He danced the steps of a jig with a perfection of grace and lightness, waved his hand by way of good-humoured farewell, and resumed his homeward way.

'He is a queer old headstrong devil, that!' observed Peter Quin.

'As old as he is, I would not like to meet a crack of that stick of his,' confessed Capel, 'unless it would be in a very good cause entirely. What maggot has he in his head at all these times, that he won't join us—not even to drink a glass to the cause, he won't. Well, as I was telling you, and mind you now this is settled, Fenlon came up this morning from Cork by the mail. He was in New York, and landed last night, and he went off on a car half an hour after he got off the train up into the mountains backwards. 'Tis to settle the signals, and the moment the word is given, the lights will be put to the dry wood on every hill from the Reeks of Kerry up to the Down Mountains, and I tell you, this will be maybe ere this day fortnight, maybe ere this day week, an' every man should sleep in his boots. This time something is to happen.'

Seriousness carried the day, as it always does in this world, and the crows were flying home in a black crowd ere the group, which increased as the day wore on, dissolved.

CHAPTER XXXVI

'It is a wonderful thing to see the semblant coherence of his men's spirits and his, they by observing of him do bear themselves like foolish justices, he by conversing with them is turned into a justice-like serving man ; their spirits are so married in conjunction with the participation of society that they flock together in consent like so many wild geese.'

By a certain Saturday morning, more than a fortnight after the prediction of old Capel, something had happened indeed. Barretstown presented the aspect of an ant-heap into which a walking-stick had been thrust. Every one was out in the street, vociferating and talking at the pitch of their voices. The coming and going was incessant, and hardly any business was transacted. The egg-lers sat patient beside their loads, waiting for the Waterford and Cork shippers' agents. The Waterford fish-dealer yelled in vain. No one could think of anything but the extraordinary events of the previous night. Luke Ahearne, Jim Cadogan, old Harry Capel, the two Kellys, Mat the servant-boy from Lambert's Castle, and Fenlon the returned American, all had been arrested in the night, and sent under escort to the county gaol. The post-office was open, of course, but two strange people were attending to the shop. The Cadogan women were invisible. Tighe O'Malley had come home suddenly and unexpectedly the previous evening. The housekeeper had received a telegram only four hours before he arrived. Lady Blanche had not accompanied him ; she was in the South of France. Then later in the day it was said that Luke Ahearne's wife had left the house and gone home to

her father's house in Waterford. Then came the news, and this time no mere report but solid fact, that the old castle near Ahearne's place had been seized by the police, and a quantity of gunpowder, fifty muskets, and other treasonable stores, found therein. They had plenty to do in Barretts-town that day besides bartering eggs, fowls, or butter. People forgot the very existence of their wares altogether. Nothing was bought or sold. Even Peter Quin, who to suit events had put on a face of tremendous gravity and melancholy, thought to himself that it was well for business interests that such crises did not occur more frequently. He sold nothing the whole day but whisky; of this commodity, however, a considerable quantity was dispensed, whether for real money or 'entered.' Excitement and debate seemed thirst-provoking. At last there seemed every prospect of a row being organised. It was given out by some mysterious agency that their heroes had not been sent away, but were confined in the strong room of the barracks, and an excited crowd gathered on the bridge, debating whether to attack the building or not. Some one sent word to Chapel House. Tighe O'Malley, it was afterwards said, who was in the barracks the entire day, watching the market-place, had sent a policeman round by the back way to warn the priests that the police would fire with ball-cartridges on any attacking party, and that a telegram had been sent to the next garrison town for police reinforcements. Whether he did this or not was never satisfactorily known, but Father Conroy and the curate made their appearance at the end of the street, clad in cassocks and birettas, and bearing huge sticks. Father Conroy had a heavy hand, as some townsfolk, who favoured wakes, dances, and such forbidden entertainments, knew to their cost, and by the time he had worked his way down to the bridge it was comparatively clear. Tighe O'Malley, who was looking out of the ball-proof-shuttered window of the barracks, breathed a sigh of deep thankfulness when he saw the burly figure of the old priest among the people on the bridge.

'Mighty fine!' Lethbridge was saying. 'I tell you eight men is all I have here. I had to send ten as escort with

those curs to the county gaol this morning. Might have recollected it was market-day, and that a crowd would be in town.'

'There's no fear of them!' snapped Tighe O'Malley, deliberately opening the window and leaning out. Had there been a revolver or musket among the crowd his white shirt-front might have proved a morsel not to be resisted. 'Father Conroy has a fine bit of ash stick there, or is it a blackthorn? Pity the head he taps! What a gathering there is just there! Look at the women getting out of the way with the baskets. I tell you, Lethbridge, it is all nonsense ordering the windows to be bolted. Tush! The spirit is not in these fellows. Hark at Father Paul, what a voice! Lablache was a penny whistle to him.'

Father Paul's great resonant basso rolled in at the window. 'Go home, Mary Kelly! You women, here, take home these fellows. Kelly, do you want to be put up beside your sons? Do you see O'Malley, your landlord, up there in the window? Begone, home! Put down that stone, my fine fellow, and have sense at my bidding, or I'll make that mutton skull of yours taste the stick I have here in my hand. Drive me to it, I say, and I will do it. Mary Kelly, let me see you and himself trip it up the Dublin Road this instant. Mrs. Clifford, take home these Cliffords of yours. Weary on you for women! what good are you not to clear the bridge? If it wasn't mischief was on foot you'd be far enough, trust ye! Oh Lord! Lord! this world was a fine place until you put women into it.'

Tighe O'Malley heard this, and uttered an appreciative yell. Thereupon the man whom Father Paul had caught aiming a stone at him burst out laughing also. The mob, facile-humoured, joined in, some, most indeed, without knowing why, and the danger was over at once. Before long Mrs. Clifford and Mary Kelly, Judy Devan, and the other country-women, were on their respective roads home, driving or wheedling their mankind along with them. For all O'Malley's talk Lethbridge was right; it might have been serious. There were only eight men in the barrack, and an attack would have been awkward. It was with a

feeling of unmixed relief that he watched the subsidence of the excitement, and saw the threatening mob of excited mountaineers scattered by Father Paul's efforts. Tighe lighted a cigar now, and sat in the window-seat smoking it. Lethbridge rather admired his coolness. Old Brown of Lees Castle and Lord Fredbury held their persons in much greater reverence. They remained together until Father Paul and his curate had retired, one to the Cadogan's shop to condole with the distracted mother and sister of Jim Cadogan, the other to the convent to hear the nun's confessions.

'Remain here,' said Lethbridge to Tighe. 'I can give you something to eat. You are alone in the big house, are you not?'

'Yes,' said Tighe. 'I'll stop with you for to-day until evening at least. I got a telegram to say that my cousin, that young fellow whom you recollect with us last May, Ansdale—he's Lord Ansdale since ten days ago—he is coming over. I wonder what fancy he has taken. I'd scarcely like to take him out to look for grouse. The fishing is done—and—as for a brush with the rebels, Lord! poor fellow, how sold he'll be.'

He turned to look out again on the market-place, which now presented its usual appearance. A sudden whim took Tighe. He put on his hat, lighted a fresh cigar, and heedless of Lethbridge's lifted eyebrows, went down and out—into the broad high street. He turned into the post-office and demanded change of a sovereign, then proceeded up the street in the direction of Peter Quin's. Every beggar he met he tossed a shilling or a florin to, and if prayers and good wishes availed aught, a halo should have been shining round his stubbly black head as he sauntered leisurely into Peter Quin's shop.

The instant Tighe O'Malley's broad shoulders appeared in the doorway, clattering the tin utensils which hung there as he swung himself in, Peter Quin dropped from his perch in the high painted desk with the celerity of a spider descending its ladder upon a victim that has been only caught by one leg in the web.

'Your honour's welcome, welcome, indeed, indeed!' said Peter, cringing to the very earth before O'Malley.

'How are ye?' said Tighe, speaking in his broadest brogue with huge heartiness, and holding out his hand.

Peter Quin wiped his hand ere he took that now offered him. Mrs. Quin's turn came next. She rubbed her hand well on her gingham apron, and curtsied not ungracefully.

'Deed, sir, it is good for sore eyes to see you!' she said, but in her own soul she wished him dead rather than to have him seen by the frequenters of the shop making such friends with herself and her husband. Tony Devoy's wife, who was under notice to quit, was sitting at one counter, and a cousin of the Cliffords, a terrible Fenian of old Cromwellian stock, was leaning up against a pile of drapery, listening to everything, watching everything, and not intending to stir for a full hour to come. It was most dangerous.

'How's the family, Quin?' asked Tighe at the pitch of his voice.

'Well, sir, thank you kindly, very well indeed in the regard of health.'

Peter Quin's little gray eyes had soon discerned that his visitor had not the health of the Quin family exclusively in his mind.

'And how is her ladyship? We hope in the best of health and soon coming over to us again.'

'Oh, well enough! She'll be over as soon as these poor fools of chaps hereabouts have given up their nonsense. I'm sorry, bedad, I went away at all. Look at those fine men in gaol to-day, and all for trash and folly.'

He was genuine enough now, for he was sorry for the serious turn things had taken.

Peter Quin watched him unrelaxingly. 'Yes,' continued Tighe, 'led away like children. They will pay for their folly now, poor fellows. Penal servitude for life is the penalty for what they have done—penal servitude for life,' repeated he gloomily.

'O-o-oh dear!' sighed Mrs. Quin; 'that is very hard on young people, sir. Now, a year or so would be enough for all the harm the creatures had in it.'

She meant this sincerely, for her thoughts went out to her own son, the promising counsellor, who was in London this week, enjoying a holiday with his sister, Miss Quin. And a passing gleam of pity for Luke Ahearne's mother lighted up the mass of selfishness and calculation which formed her nature.

Peter Quin shook his head solemnly and gloomily. He was reflecting, not too comfortably, that a parcel of cartridges was still lying in one of his lofts, forgotten by the people who had transferred the ammunition from his premises to the ruined Lambert's Castle. It was safe enough. He eyed O'Malley incessantly, waiting for a propitious moment.

'If I might make so bold as offer your honour any small refreshment,' he said at last.

'Thanky! presently, Quin. I have a small matter of business to speak over with you.'

'Delighted, your honour! Anything I could oblige you in, 'twould be a pleasure. If your honour would just step into my private apartments.'

A nod and gesture to his wife conveyed to his astute helpmate two separate intimations, one, that no one was to be suffered to disturb their privacy, the other, that refreshments, and of a certain class, were to be sent up.

Mrs. Quin summoned her aide-de-camp, and in a few minutes a barefooted rough-headed girl carried in a tray on which was a bottle of champagne, of an expensive brand, a decanter of whisky, of by no means the same description as that sold in the shop, soda water, and Barrettwater, and a box of cigars, together with a plate of biscuits fresh out of their box.

Tighe walked up the cocoa-fibre-covered stairs, staring round him at everything, and presently found himself in the drawing-room. The Quin family, with complete *sans gêne*, lived in another room farther back; this was seldom entered, being a kind of temple sacred to Miss Quin. Her photographs at various ages were to be seen everywhere that wax fruits and bouquets of wax flowers, covered by huge glass shades, were not. Wool macaws and phenomenal roses in wool stuff, together with beaded gew-gaws

of every description, were amply *en évidence*. Something fell down at every stride O'Malley took, either a leaflet of a wax blossom or an antimacassar. He read attentively a gold and blue certificate of good conduct presented to Miss Quin on leaving school, framed with magnificence, which hung over the mantelpiece.

'Your daughter is grown up, Quin,' observed Tighe, leaning against the mantelpiece, and noticing how different a being Quin seemed out of the shop—how awkward and uncouth he was among the tables and chairs. O'Malley while speaking was squinting at the label of the champagne which his host was in process of uncorking.

'What a fortune you'll be able to give her!'

'Oh, well for dat dere,' replied Peter Quin, seeing his way to an effect, 'five or six thousand, and may be so much more, if she's in no hurry.'

Tighe coughed in his champagne glass, so much astonished was he.

'By Jove!' he ejaculated at last. 'I daresay you could lend me a couple of thousand. I don't wonder you were able to gratify your fancy about Lambert's Castle. By the bye, I had an offer for it from two other people in the town. Fagan of the hotel offered seven hundred and fifty, and Mrs. Cadogan at the post-office offered nine hundred.'

'Nine hundred!' repeated Quin with a sneer. 'Ay, she thought to settle her daughter with that young Ambrose Daly of the Larkshill. That is what she would be at, the widow. Well, poor crature, 'tis nature. We must do the best we can.'

'I was told that it was for that drunken ruffian, that broken-down student, her son, that she wanted to settle him on a farm, thinking to steady him. The daughter is a good girl, a very good girl indeed. If I had thought it was for her, I should certainly have given Widow Cadogan the preference.'

Peter Quin, who was a little stunned by this, reflected to himself that luck was on his side. Then he reflected in addition, that this beneficent ruler of destiny had most probably spent his thousand pounds before he heard of the

widow's proposal, and congratulated himself upon his own promptness of action.

'Her plans for him are all useless now,' said Tighe, finishing his third glass of champagne. 'Her Majesty has taken him into her safe keeping for the next twenty years, I expect.'

'And Ahearne?' questioned Peter Quin.

'And Ahearne? no doubt that find of war materials on his premises settles him. Idiots and fools! The ignorance of these people is fearful. They think to face the Queen's troops with sticks and stones, rag dolls against dragoons. It is truly pitiable to think of the punishment that this silly child's play will be visited with!'

'They will be moved up to Dublin to be tried, of course,' observed Quin.

O'Malley made no answer. He remained silent for an instant. Perhaps the thoughts of Luke Ahearne, whom he recollected as a curly-headed little child, and the awful fate that awaited him, now proved oppressive.

'Quin, the bank is giving you two and a half per cent on your money. Of course, you have it in the bank?'

Of course Quin had. What did he know of stocks, or shares, or investments, outside his Gombeen business? The bank did, and floated company after company in London and elsewhere with Quin's money and that of his peers.

'I will give you six, if you will give me two thousand on my note of hand, payable six months hence.'

Quin's eyes seemed to retreat into his head. He waited a second before replying.

'Your honour knows if anything happened to you——'

'Pooh, man! You shall have ample security—leases or anything else.'

Tighe was hard pressed for money and jumped at this straw. He had lost heavily at Goodwood, and had been forced to ask for time, which galled him, for he liked to settle regularly.

'Delighted, your honour! only too glad!' said Quin. 'Let me give you a taste of this whisky, sir.'

'Not potheen, I hope?'

'Augh! never name it, sir! I were lost to allow it to put foot inside me door. This paid the Queen's dues every hour of twenty years ago.'

'Where does he think he'll go to?' mused Tighe, nodding in token of assent.

'Quin, I say,' he began presently, 'how is it that Godfrey—er—what do you call him, beyond at the Quaker's old place?'

'I know, sir.'

'Well, why has he not been taken like these other fellows?'

Peter Quin scratched his head and put on an idiotic expression, as though the question stunned him.

'I can't make it out. He is chin deep in treason.'

'Oh, fait! no doubt, your honour!'

Tighe looked keenly at his host, but there was absolutely nothing to be gathered from Peter Quin's countenance, the owner having purposely discharged it of every semblance of human intelligence.

'Foxing!' thought O'Malley, who knew his man. 'No doubt!' echoed he almost angrily. 'Why, don't you *know* he is?'

Peter Quin affected to start violently. 'Aisy, sir, your honour!' he cried; 'you don't know who's listening to you. 'Tis no time to speak of such things at all. Sure, what do I know more than others? 'Tis well known the poor young gentleman was in it wit' the rest of them.'

'Poor young gentleman!' Tighe brought down his fist on his own knee as he repeated these words internally. 'Lethbridge is right. This is enough! enough indeed! By the Lord Harry! these precious natives look on him as my lawful heir. What on earth possessed me to allow that nest of vipers to grow up within reach of me as I have done? I'll live to rue it, I swear! What is to be done? How is he to be got out of the county?' Then aloud—

'He will be arrested before the week's out, Quin!'

He bent his brows with a black threatening scowl as he spoke.

'Oh Lord! Bless us, sir, the poor boy!'

'Well, if you're a friend to him, send him a friendly word. Mark, Quin, if you let one word of this pass your lips to a soul!! Find a way to warn him if you don't want to see him beside Cadogan and the rest. And now'—he rose to go, and straightened his broad shoulders—'as to the money, I want it by the twenty-eighth at latest.'

'That's enough, your honour, and plenty—and you can depend on me every way.'

'Young gentleman!' muttered Tighe again, as he strode down the filthy main street on his way back to the barrack. 'Quin might have known more than that. Will he warn that boy? Will that boy take the warning? I confess I don't fancy the idea of seeing my kinsman figure as a patriot in the dock for treason felony! Peuh! the mad creatures these Irish all are. I'll sell the property out and out, and go and live anywhere out of this open Bedlam.'

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CHAPTER XXXVII

'Oh ! charms, seductions, and divine delights !
All through the radiant yellow summer nights,
Dreams, hardly dreams, that yield or e'er they're done.
To the bright fact, my day, my risen sun.
O promise and fulfilment, both in one !
O bliss already bliss which nought has shared,
Whose glory no fruition has impaired
And emblem of my state, thou coming day
With all thy hours unspent to pass away,
Why do I wait ? what more propose to know
When the sweet mandate bids me. Let me go.
. . . For love is fellow-service, I believe.'

A FEW minutes after ten o'clock one fine morning towards the end of the week saw Chichele Ansdale, now Lord Ansdale, standing at the garden door of the Fir House with his hand upon the latch. He did not dare after his last experience to go to the hall door, and he knew, in his haste and passion, no better way of seeing Marion than by making this bold attempt. He was breathless after his rapid walk—run it had almost been from the time he had crossed the upper bridge and opened the green door of the Quaker's garden. He had arrived by the night mail, and had not slept, scarcely eaten, since leaving London the previous morning. Nevertheless he felt no fatigue, no weariness, and his eyes explored the garden all round, as keen, as untired as though he had but risen from a refreshing sleep.

He had called at Chapel House in the hope of finding Father Conroy, but had been told that he was saying mass

and would be invisible until after eleven o'clock, by which time his breakfast would be over. To wait for nearly an hour was not within the range of possibilities for Chichele, so, leaving a card with a pencilled message on it to the effect that he would call later, he betook himself as fast as his limbs would carry him by that well-known, and, in thought at least, much-travelled approach to the Fir House.

Had it occurred to him to look into the chapel as he passed it in his headlong career, he would have found there the object of his quest, engaged as usual at her morning devotions. But Chichele saw nothing, could think of nothing, but the green aisles of the Quaker's garden, and Marion's face therein set once more in a frame of flowers. Every well-remembered and cherished landmark was passed one by one, and unheeded, and he stood at last, panting and hot, on the sill of the old doorway, the latch in his hand yet, and gazing eagerly in. At the first glance he hardly recognised the place. A terrible shock passed over him: it was like the presage of a coming misfortune. How different it was! Then after a moment he smiled at himself for expecting to find anything else.

'May!' he said half aloud. 'It was the fourth of May that I was here, that last time. June, one, July, two, August, three, September, four. Four months and more. Heavens! how have I existed since? Yes, it is autumn now, of course. Where *is* she? Who in the world will come here to whom I can give a message to her? Oh, that it might be herself! If she would only come! Yes, it is autumn now,' he murmured sadly, looking round him. 'How changed the place is!'

He closed the door now, and placed himself in a thicket of ivy, screened in front by a clump of raspberry bushes, determined to wait at any hazard.

The autumn was indeed come, and the garden of the Quaker's house confessed its presence openly. The old apple-trees showed here and there a red or yellow pippin, and little brown misshapen pears clustered in bunches among the gnarled knotted branches and stained leaves. Every one of the roses was gone save the tea roses, and their

leaves were scorched to a bronze colour by the hot kisses of the summer sun. The mignonette had all run to seed, and tumbled itself headlong over the box edges. A fine show of red geraniums and pinks yet lingered here and there, but even the caress of the little breeze that stole down the alleys among the espalier trees gave its deathblow to some of these lingering beauties of the dying season. The beech leaves rustled harshly, the sycamores lifted their broad skirts and shook them out as they dispersed their winged seeds abroad, and one by one the chestnuts let fall their long finger-like leaves to the earth. White and red-brown butterflies flitted and sported in the air. Long trailing filaments swung and glistened in the mellow autumn sunlight. The young swallows were practising for their flight southwards, and their shrill twittering alone broke the silence. A blue sky, cloudless and serene, but seeming pale through the intervening vapours which the sun had drawn up, was overhead. There had been a heavy dew during the night, and the dahlia flowers were full of liquid crystal. Little wet white stars strewed the ground about the jessamine tree, and more than one full-blown tea rose had found the burden more than it could bear, and had fallen prone and dishevelled on the earth. Everything was dying, and exhaled its last sweetness. The whole air was full of the smell of ripe fruit; the dropping leaves gave forth a pungent aroma as they went.

Chichele stood immovable for a long time, listening and watching.

‘Can they be here? Could it be that they have gone away? Why did I not ask somebody?’

He walked rapidly down one of the walks, which led away from the house, so that he might get a view of it. The chimneys were smoking—he noted that fact, and it dispersed his wild fancies—and a great outcry from the fowl-yard arose suddenly and unanimously just at that moment.

Then he heard the rusty bolt of the yard door being drawn back, and a scolding harsh voice sounded almost simultaneously in exhortation and command.

'Bring that spade with ye, and shut de door, ye cursed strap! Do ye want to let de hens in de dairy on me?'

Chichele, who had advanced on hearing the gate open, stepped back hastily through the raspberry bushes into the ivy thicket, whence, unseen himself, he could see and hear.

Kitty Macan's white cap soon appeared. She was walking down the alley, which led straight to where he was concealed, talking loudly and gesticulating with a large knife which she carried in one hand. Behind her, carrying a wicker basket and a spade, walked submissively a bare-footed, very fat, red-haired girl. They stopped half way down the walk, and Mrs. Macan set to select cabbages from a plot on the right of the path. She gave the knife to her attendant, and indicated the objects of her preference by pointing them out with her foot.

'Cut off dat, and take dis, you hear. Don't go tread on dose. Dat's not hearted yet. How many have you? Tree heads? Cut anoder. Lord! the eating that goes on in dis house! Poor Miss D'Arcy! How do she stand it at all, let alone the roguery and robbery we has to contend wit'! Giv me dose cabbages in my apron. Now lift the basket, and we's take the potatoes.'

They passed by now, almost within touch of him in his hiding-place, and proceeded to dig potatoes in a patch farther down. Kitty Macan's voice never ceased.

'You may say till the tongue wither in your head, but I heard dem two hens, my own ears heard dem, after laying dis morning, an' find deir eggs I cannot, nowhere. Saturday night now, you'll go home to your mudder—she reared you in roguery, and you are as great a rogue as ever laid side to a bed.'

'May I choke dead in my standing, Mrs. Macan, if I ever saw light or sight of an egg this day!'

'Hold your tongue dis minute! Don't answer me! You hear me, Judy, you is the stupidest, ignorantest creature in Cork County this day of grace. Don't let me see you cut dem like dat. Dear! dear! Miss Marion not back from mass yet, and I wanting to be about my business in de town!'

'Mass! yet!' ejaculated Chichele. 'What! This is not Sunday surely?'

The basket was full now, and the barefooted girl hoisted it up off the ground, and set out awkwardly enough for the yard door. Kitty Macan left the spade sticking in the ground, and sauntered with dignity up the walk after her. Chichele was much tempted to stop her, but the recollection of their last encounter froze the words upon his lips. She might give the alarm. Marion might fly off to some remote and inaccessible fastness. She had never answered his letters—to be sure he never expected she would; she was so shy, and so timid. Father Paul had certainly never stated that he had given them to her, but he had always acknowledged their receipt to himself. Had he given them to her—or not?

'That terrible hag!' thought he, watching the devious course of Kitty's white frills above the tops of the bushes. The clapping of the yard gate sounded at that moment. 'Thank Heaven, there she goes!' he exclaimed thankfully, stepping out of the ivy, and pushing his way through the raspberries back to the path again. He looked at his watch once more—ten minutes to eleven.

'A mass lasts how long? An hour and a half—two hours? Is this a saint's day or not? What has possessed her to go to church on a week-day?' He groaned with impatience, and stamped upon the gravel walk. 'That is the place where they let loose the ferret that day—that mad day.' He was looking at a wild part of the garden now, recalling one by one the incidents of his visit in the spring. 'There is the ditch where Gertrude and Godfrey saw the hare. Poor Godfrey! poor boy! How I pity him? Shall I be able to change—soften—even—his lot? There is the old tree, the very branch,' he cried as her face seemed to rise before him, once more framed among the blossoms. 'Oh, Marion! Marion! I have come to-day to keep my word. Where are you? where are you?'

He paced to and fro in a fever of irritation. The sun scorched the back of his neck and dazzled his eyes. The sky burned bluer and bluer as the mists all dried off. Not

one cloud was visible, and the bronze and gold of the leaves took metallic reflections as the faint breeze moved them.

'Oh heaven! this delay is maddening.' The idea occurred to him then of opening the door and looking to see if she were coming. He turned round impatiently, almost angrily—to find himself face to face with Marion.

She had entered the garden unheard, while his back was turned to the door which led down into the osier swamps.

She stood as though petrified. Every vestige of colour faded from her face. Her eyes seemed to darken, and her little book fell to the ground.

Although at every moment up till now her image seemed before him, although his very eyes were strained from mentally tracing her features, he also was almost stunned at her expected yet startling appearance.

They stood for one moment gazing at each other. Marion's heart seemed to have ceased to beat altogether. She felt as if turning into stone. Chichele's temples throbbed as if they would burst—for a moment only. Then with a deep breath of relief he seized both her hands, gripping them hard by the wrists.

'At last! at last!' he said passionately, almost inaudibly.

She did not attempt to release them, standing passive and silent, hardly realising yet what had happened.

'I said I would come back; you see, I have come,' he said. 'Why did you not write to me? You got my letters! Why did you not send me a word even? How cruel you have been to me! Why do you not speak to me now? Come away down here.'

Holding her by one wrist still, he drew her away down the walk into the thicket of laurels at the end of the garden.

'Now, why don't you speak to me?' He stopped and turned so that they faced each other. There was a deep shade all round them, cast by the laurel-trees, and now that the sun was not any longer in his eyes, he could see how pale her face was, how thin—could note the size and brilliancy of

the beautiful eyes that were turned on him now with a look of unspeakable sadness and terror in them.

'I—I must not,' broke from her lips.

'Must not!' he echoed. 'Must not! Who says so? Marion, don't say such things to me! I have come to take you away—yes.' He let go her wrists now, and placed both hands on her shoulders. 'Look at me! I tell you to look at me!'

She had to obey him, trembling from head to foot. Every doubt, every resolve melted like snow before the sun in the light that beat upon her from his honest eyes.

'I'll take you away with me, clear out of this—to the other side of the world if you like—you shall choose. We shall be married by Father Conroy. We will take Godfrey and Gertrude and go away for ever.'

Her colour rose now. Bright crimson suffused cheek and brow and neck, then faded away, leaving an ivory whiteness in its stead. Her lips quivered; and from her eyes, glowing and dilated an instant before, two great tears rolled up, and overflowing, ran down her cheeks.

'You cannot, Chichele! That can never be! You do not know——'

'I do know—I know everything, everything,' he murmured, stooping and whispering in her ear. 'I know everything, Marion,' he repeated, turning his head so as to look into her eyes, in which the tears were glistening still.

The flickering shadows of the leaves ran light as thoughts over her pale face. From a hundred eyelet-holes in the foliage the blue sky looked down on them both, and with one long slender finger the sun touched her lips and showed Chichele a smile upon them.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

‘To be furious

Is it to be frightened out of fear, and in that mood
The dove will pick the estridge. . . .’

‘. . . Yet hath my night of life some memory,
My wasting lamp some fading glimmer left,
My dull deaf ears a little use to hear.
All these old witnesses, I cannot err,
Tell me——’

ABOUT three o'clock of the same day that witnessed Lord Ansdale's reappearance in Barretts town, Godfrey not having appeared to breakfast yet, Kitty Macan prepared a tray and carried some food up to his room. Receiving no answer when she tapped at the door, she entered without delay. The blinds were up, the shutters open; the sun poured in a mote-laden flood of golden light. One window which looked out on the front of the house was open, and the twitter of the swallows made itself heard against the drowsy mutter of the weir. Kitty Macan pushed the door with one elbow so as to close it, and advanced to the bedside with her tray. The greyhound Fly was sitting motionless beside the bed, his muzzle resting on it and his eyes fixed on his sleeping master's face.

‘God bless us!’ she ejaculated suddenly.

Godfrey was lying stretched to the full length of his long limbs, and fully dressed. He was lying on his back, and so pale, so worn was his face, that it was no wonder Kitty Macan was reminded rather of some one lying dead than only sleeping. He scarcely seemed to breathe. His

jet-black hair was all tossed, and partly covered his forehead, which showed an ivory whiteness below it. The dark semicircles which were traced round either eye by his long eyelashes looked blue on the olive paleness of his smooth almost childish cheek.

Kitty shook her head, noting the travel-stained clothes, which he had doubtless been too tired to take off on his return.

'Eh! but ye are the wild creature, Godfrey Maulever—they may well say it in the town—wild as a hawk. God help ye, child, and send ye sense and your own again!'

She stood for a moment looking at his sleeping figure, half admiring the beauty that was patent even to her untrained eyes, half pitying the forlorn ill-guided lad.

'I'll not wake him,' she muttered presently. 'He can get a bit whenever he likes to wake up himself.' She laid down the tray, and went away in search of a warm rug, which she spread gently over the recumbent figure, and then taking up the tray again returned to the nether regions whence she had come.

It was nearly seven when Godfrey appeared in his grand-aunt's sitting-room. Marion and Gertrude were there, this last in a state of wild excitement.

'Godfrey! oh, Godfrey!' she cried the moment he entered. 'I thought you were never coming down. What do you think is the news? Chichele has come back—Chichele—do you hear that? He said he would. I always told you; and Marion would never listen to me. Now, who was right? And his uncle is dead, and he is a lord, and he has all his uncle's money, and the land and the houses. Tommy Burke the constabulary man heard it all from his valet. They are stopping down there in the police barrack for the day, but they are to go home to the castle this evening for dinner. I met Chichele to-day on the road as I came from school, and he ran to meet me, and said he was so glad, and that he had brought me a present from London; but I am not to get it until to-morrow.'

'Let me see you dare touch it!' hissed Godfrey. His

face was livid with passion, and his black brows bent in a fury of wrath upon her. 'Don't speak of him to me.'

'What! what!' cried Miss D'Arcy, with a sudden start, a faint flush of colour spreading itself in her cheeks. 'Children, what is it? Marion! Godfrey, my darling, who has annoyed you?'

Marion, who this time had greeted Godfrey's burst of petulance with a smile only, held up a warning finger, and made haste to the old woman's side to calm her.

'Don't mind him, Aunt Juliet,' she said. 'It is Gertrude—she has annoyed him. Never mind—it is all over now.' She stroked Juliet D'Arcy's white bandeaux.

'Gertrude indeed!' growled Godfrey, fixing a thunderous look on her; 'I have something to say to *you*, I can tell you.'

'Aunt Ju, give us our tea,' said Marion. Miss D'Arcy was trembling from head to foot, and looking from one face to another as if in search of something.

Marion's whole countenance was transformed. A bright rose tint suffused her cheeks, and her eyes shone with an unwonted lustre. Even her hair looked different. She had turned it back off her brows, and a hundred little black feather-like curls had pushed themselves out, and seemed to palpitate with every breath. She moved more quickly and lightly than before. She took up the tea-pot and began to pour the tea into her aunt's own cup. This was an encroachment which Juliet never allowed. The moment she saw what Marion was doing she gave her a tap on the arm, which signified that she was to cease at once, and, calmed once more, the old woman set about fulfilling her usual duties.

'Give Godfrey some chicken,' she said to Gertrude, anxious as usual for him, and not seeing that he was already busy eating the said chicken with feverish appetite.

'Godfrey!' said Gertrude insistingly, but speaking in a low voice so that Miss D'Arcy could not hear her, 'what have you against Chichele. What has set you against him? Oh, I do like him so much!'

'You are not to speak to him. If ever he comes here

again I shall throw him into the river. What?—Godfrey nearly choked with anger—‘what do you mean, you and Marion? You don’t know how to conduct yourselves. I am not going to have my sister’s name a byword in Quin’s shop. Marion! you are to have nothing to do with him or any one from the Castle. His visits, his thrusting himself upon us, is an insult, and dangerous too. Do you hear me, both?’ he questioned imperiously.

Marion stopped him, again holding up a warning finger and pointing to Juliet. He ate silently for an instant or two, then, casting a look of anger and impatience upon them, rose and left the room.

‘What is this for?’ pouted Gertrude, ready to cry. ‘Marion, why may we not see him? Why do you laugh?’

Godfrey went up silently to his room, took his little knapsack from a drawer, slung it over his shoulders, examined his revolver, and put it in his breast pocket. Then he descended the stairs noiselessly, and passed out of the hall door. Of late he had preferred this to the window. He entered the mill from the front gate, saddled and led out Harry Capel’s riding-horse, and in a few minutes was speeding fast on his way to a secret meeting nearly eight miles away.

Godfrey had been of late in a state almost approaching desperation. The movement into which he had thrown himself with all the energies of his wild and undisciplined nature was crumbling into dissolution. His lieutenants and coadjutors, Cadogan, Ahearne, Fenlon, and the Kellys, were all in prison. The battle seemed over and done without a blow having been struck, and the paltriness and ignorant folly of everything seemed revealed to him in all their squalid nakedness, and at once revolted and oppressed him. He set his teeth to keep down the passion that shook him, the impotent rage of contempt that was working in him. He had sent out orders—having stepped into Fenlon’s place as chief of the district on the arrest of the last-named—to have all the men available collected as soon as it should be dark, on a dry plateau in the Knockstuart Bog, intending to march them on the barracks in Barrettstown. Hav-

ing taken the barracks they would pass on the word to Limerick, and the south and west generally, and hold the place until reinforcements should come up.

As he rode he was preparing his address to the men. He meant to head them in an attack on Barrettstown police barracks or face death—anything—before morning, but this shameful inaction must cease, and at once.

The sultry day had been followed by a breeze at sundown, which was now rapidly rising to a storm. Black thick clouds obscured the sky, and rapidly darkened the lingering remains of the twilight. Great drops of rain were carried on the wind, which souged and whistled eerily as it swept over the bog reaches. A livid gray streak marked the lough in the distance. Now and again a mysterious cry, as of a bird, sounded on the air.

Godfrey's humour suited with the weird desolation of the scene. His practised eye recognised all the landmarks; his ear told him the difference between a real bird cry and its imitation, and more than once he pulled up his horse and sent a curlew whistle shrilling down the dark wastes in response to wild challenges that were meant for his ear, not a bird's.

He turned off the road presently on to a cart-track used by the turf-cutters, and before long was riding on a large turf-bank covered with stacked piles of turf ready to be drawn home. From every heap of sods came a signal or a counter-signal. Dark figures appeared singly, and then vanished to reappear in twos and threes. A lanthorn flashed out with electric suddenness. Godfrey pressed on his horse towards this beacon, and on reaching it found himself the centre of a crowd.

To call the roll was the first proceeding. Out of a list numbering over three hundred men's names not fifty were present. Not fifty! His head swam. He had never expected so ignominious a failure as this. Even with this number he would not flinch. He would lead them to Barrettstown. Action must be taken. The supreme hour had come.

In a few fiery sentences he exhorted them, castigated

the laggards, and declared his determination to strike a blow that night that would make itself felt, that all Ireland would respond to. They cheered him and applauded, but there was evidently some counter-feeling in their minds. One man, a mountaineer, advanced to the horse's side. 'Master Godfrey!' he said, laying his hand on the young speaker's sleeve, '*avic*, you are young to be running your head in the hangman's knot like this. Leave it to your elders, *achora* (dear one of my heart), and ride home.'

'Ride home!' said another, proceeding actually to turn the horse's head. 'We'll go widout you, *avic machree*. You have the spirit of the Maulevers; we know it. We'll not let harm come near you, sir. Shut your eyes and your ears this night, and you'll wake to-morrow in your own place, sir, in Barrettsdown Castle, and bloody Tighe O'Malley the interloper hanging on the door-post.'

'Aye, aye!' shouted the rest in a fierce unison. 'We'll see to him, damn him!' they all cried in chorus. 'Mr. Godfrey, you will be Mauleverer of Barrettsdown, which is your due, before you are a whole day older.'

'We'll march on Barrettsdown sure enough, but we'll take the Castle first—he is there to-night as if to dare us—and hang the damned interloper. You'll come to your own again.'

Godfrey's head was reeling; he nearly fell. The rough voices sounded in his ears like the rushing of some mighty flood. Were they also mocking, insulting him? Surely they knew! All the blood in his body was tingling in his cheeks now. Did these men think he played a sordid, selfish part, that he only used them, willing tools, for his own ends?

He uttered a cry, inarticulate, choked, with a fury of disgust, and reigned up the horse almost on its haunches.

'Never! never! Don't dare such a tling, you mean scoundrels! you devils!' he screamed at them.

The crowd stood petrified in amazement. He had turned the horse while they were gazing at him.

'I'll ride to him now and warn him. You'll never see me again! Ugh! you brutes! you slaves!'

The last part of this he shouted at them, kicking the horse's sides and starting him into a gallop. A dozen hands made a dozen ineffectual grasps at the bridle, the stirrup leathers, or the crupper, as he passed, and a deep-mouthed yell of disappointment and bewilderment followed him. He was out of reach almost before they had realised the sense and import of his words, galloping along the green-sward beside the high-road.

'The mercenary odious brutes! mad, oh God! how mad I've been! They'd murder O'Malley, thinking to put me in his place—*me!*' A burst of maniacal laughter finished the sentence. 'I'll warn him, warn him—then fly the country for ever, and enlist. I'll go abroad to Spain or Germany—a soldier is always welcome—and enlist.'

He urged the horse at full speed, and was soon standing at the entrance gate of Barrettstown. A policeman was in the lodge, and opened the gate at once on hearing the imperious summons. 'Follow me to the house!' shouted Godfrey, starting off up the avenue.

The gray sinuous drive, just discernible in the darkness, wound before him between the dark aisles of the trees. The storm was tossing their thick-leaved branches, shrieking ominously as it tore its way through them. Boughs were snapped and flung hither and thither in its course, and the leaves went down before its fierce onslaught like ripe corn before the scythe.

Not a light was to be seen in the whole house front. Godfrey dismounted, and fastened the horse to a balustrade on the terrace. His approach had been heard, however, for a window not far from the door opened, and an authoritative voice shouted out loudly in order to be heard above the storm.

'Hallo! who is it? who is there?' The wind carried the words far afield. Godfrey could but just hear them as if from a distance.

'Come down at once!' he shouted back, throwing up both arms excitedly. 'There is no time to lose. They are on the road.'

The rattle of the chains and bolts made itself heard almost

immediately. The door was opened, and Godfrey leapt across the threshold to find himself in an almost blinding glare of light, while the barking of dogs and the loud-voiced adjurations of O'Malley, the confused ejaculations of other persons present, helped to dazzle and confuse him, standing as he was in the centre of the great round hall, the cynosure of all their eyes. Not for long! He passed his hand once across his forehead, and making a strong effort, addressed himself directly to Tighe O'Malley.

'My business is with you and no one else—but I don't object to your remaining.' He added this on catching sight of Lethbridge, who was watching him closely and intently. Lethbridge suspected a trap on the part of Godfrey, and would not have been surprised had he suddenly shot or stabbed O'Malley. He watched his eyes and hands with persistent closeness.

'There's not a minute to be lost,' cried Godfrey excitedly. 'Make haste!'

Tighe O'Malley, who was stirred notwithstanding his efforts to appear calm, raised his hand, and with a look dismissed the bystanders. Chichele, whom Godfrey had not seen, sprang into a window embrasure, and let the servants and policemen file by him towards a door which led to the interior of the house.

Tighe O'Malley pointed to a chair. 'Will you not sit down, Mauleverer?' he said.

Godfrey took no notice of him, and remained standing still, full in the light of the lamp, which Tighe had carried with him from the smoking-room on hearing the alarm. He was waiting for the servants to pass out before he spoke.

'There is a plot to assassinate you to-night,' he broke out as soon as the last one had gone and the hall door had closed. He spoke in a high clear voice. 'It has existed for some time, but I knew nothing of it until to-night, an hour ago. I never dreamed that the men intended to kill you—for *my* profit, as they fancied. I told them I would warn you, O'Malley. You may expect them here now at any moment.'

'Why have you come to denounce them—you! one of their leaders?' Lethbridge burst out.

'O'Malley,' pursued Godfrey, taking no notice of this, 'you are warned now, at the peril of my own life—it is the least I can do since it seems you are marked out. You will hear no more of me!'

O'Malley, who had seated himself at a table by the wall, groaned bitterly.

Godfrey turned to go. Tighe jumped up, stretching out his hand.

'One moment, Mauleverer!' he pleaded. 'Hear me. You have been deeply wronged. My poor fellow, don't go! Don't run into the jaws of the lion! The park is full of police, the house is also; the military are under arms in Mallow and Limerick. We knew all; we were ready for them. In God's name, give up this folly, and let me do something for you in reparation for the past! Let me try to make amends to you—for—for——'

O'Malley was deeply touched. The spectacle of the desperate lost young creature risking so much to do an act of what was certainly unmerited generosity, was more than he could endure unmoved.

'Godfrey!' cried Chichele, hurriedly leaving the window and coming forward, 'stop with us, I beg! Don't risk going out! I have a right to ask you—I——'

But Godfrey rushed at him with a fierce execration, striking out blindly before him. Lethbridge ran in between them, and received Godfrey's clenched hand full on his mouth. He shouted for his men, and tried to catch hold of his assailant, but he was too quick for them all. He snatched the lamp, hurled it against the wall, plunging them all into darkness, with the other hand unfastened the door, and before they could reach or stop him was again on the horse's back, and careering wildly towards the gate, not by the drive this time, across the open ground.

At Lethbridge's shout the men, who had not gone far, all poured in.

'After him! catch him!' he cried.

'No!' thundered Tighe angrily, and stamping his foot.

'Let him alone! let him go! Bring lights here quick! If you had not interfered, I might have done something with him. He'll go home until morning. I'll send some one to meet him at the station. I know exactly what he'll do. Fasten up all here, and clear out of this again. If those rascals come we may as well be ready for them.' Lethbridge went off with his men, and O'Malley set to tramp up and down the floor, musing and muttering to himself.

'What a fine fellow he is, Chichele!' he cried after a time. 'What a thorough Mauleverer he looked, poor boy! Poor hunted creature, his hand against every one, every one's hand against him!'

Chichele was sitting crosswise in a chair, his elbows leaning on the back of it, and his face buried in his hands. Godfrey's sudden attack upon him had stunned him, and he was wondering what the cause of it could possibly be.

'Tighe,' he said, after a long silence, 'is he in danger of his life? Would the Fenians kill him for warning you in this way?'

'Not they—never—never! Who would hurt him?' groaned O'Malley. 'What a generous act! and daring too. Oh, I ought to have done something long ago—I ought never to have left that creature there!'

Chichele, who had asked and obtained an appointment with Father Conroy at ten o'clock the next morning, thought to himself that he had a solution of the difficulty. Nevertheless he felt restless and uneasy. He wanted to follow Godfrey to the mill-house, to go out into the park and look for him. Tighe and Lethbridge peremptorily forbade him to stir.

* * * * *

The storm was wilder than ever, and great scattered drops of rain beat on Godfrey's face as he galloped across the open ground. He would save a few minutes by taking that route. He broke through the plantations of young firs, brushed under the great cherry-laurels, scaring the birds roughly. The whirling leaves and the rain together nearly blinded him. Before long a wire fence stopped him

very effectively. He recognised the place ; the river-bank sloped down from it. He jumped off, threw the rein on the horse's back, and turning him round gave him a blow on the quarter, and sent him adrift in the demesne. There was no fear of his being lost.

A few minutes afterwards he was at the weir. The rainfall in the mountains was beginning to tell, and there was a considerable increase in the quantity of water running over. He swung himself down, and catching the top ledge scrambled across, not without difficulty, for he was terribly tired and exhausted, nor without getting very wet.

'How am I to get back?' he thought ; 'and I must cross it again, once I get the money from Aunt Juliet. Then up to Kelly's—Pat Kelly will give me a horse as far as Limerick. I'll get as far as that easily enough.'

It was not yet eleven when he reached the gates of the Quaker's house. The sitting-room window still showed a light. He opened the hall door without being heard, and stepped into the room where Juliet D'Arcy was sitting. She was preparing to go to bed ; her old watch with a diamond cypher on its back lay on her little table, where she had laid it down after winding it. She stared at him, instinctively knowing that there was something wrong.

'Aunt Juliet,' he began without delay, 'I want money from you—all that you have in the house.' He nodded at her cupboard where she kept her stores. The keys were hanging in the door still.

'Money ! this hour of the night ! money ! Child, what do you say to me ?'

'I must go away to-night, Aunt Ju,' he cried. 'I cannot wait.'

She stared at him mutely.

A violent gust shook the window at that moment. The noise of the river increased ; wild voices seemed to call out of the darkness, and the great pine-tree swayed and strained as the blast caught its topheavy head. From the woods on the other side of the river came a weird sound as though of a gigantic Æolian harp fitfully stirred.

Juliet D'Arcy started violently. Some unwonted feeling,

some old memory, stirred within her. Her cheeks flushed and paled, and she trembled from head to foot.

'Godfrey! oh, Godfrey! don't go!' she entreated pitifully. 'Godfrey! I beseech you!'

'Give me the money, Aunt Ju! give me the money, and let me go. I am never coming back. I must go. I have to go!'

'Godfrey! oh, Godfrey!' wailed Juliet. She stood up. Her eyes were dilated and fixed; she was shaking in every limb. Once again the casement shook as the storm lashed it. The river without hissed and boiled like some angry thing.

'Give it to me,' cried he. 'I must—I must go!' He had opened the press door beside her, and was scattering its contents right and left.

'Don't be angry!' he sobbed. 'I cannot help it. I must go.'

'Oh, Godfrey! the children! don't go, Godfrey dear!' She caught his sleeve and held it. Juliet D'Arcy was in Barrettsdown no more. She was in the cottage near the rocks of St. Helier's, and it was not Godfrey, but his father, who was standing before her. It was not the storm harrying Barrettsdown woods, but the thunderous intermittent sound of the surf that came through the window and filled her ears. Captain Mauleverer was standing before her, his face set in a scowl.

'Let me go! I must go! They'll be watching for me,' cried Godfrey. 'Oh, let me go!'

He dragged himself loose from her hold, dashed through the door, and out into the darkness.

Juliet D'Arcy fell back, gasping for breath, in her chair. 'I have it!' she cried aloud. 'After all those years—at last. Thank God, at last! Aird's West—Aird's West! It shall not escape me again. Ismay, my poor girl, at last!'

Tears of joy were running down her flushed cheeks. She took her pen—it lay on the little table beside her—and wrote down the name clearly enough, for all her trembling, in several places on a sheet of paper.

'I will write a letter to Father Paul,' she said aloud in

a feverish voice that echoed strangely in the now silent room. 'Kitty shall take it at six o'clock to-morrow morning. Before mass, even before the first mass, we will set this right. Ismay, poor Ismay, forgive me!'

She began her letter, but before she had written more than half of it, the pen fell on the paper; her fingers had lost their power. She tried to go on, ineffectually. It was as though she had signed her own manumission. The scarlet flush faded from her cheeks. The quiverings of her poor tired old limbs ceased at last, and with a deep long sigh, as it were of relief and perhaps thankfulness, Miss D'Arcy fell back in her chair.

* * * * *

The old servant-woman found her between six and seven o'clock the next morning dead, and cold long since, but looking so peaceful, her face wearing such a placid, almost happy expression, that she thought at first that she must be only asleep. Then the aspect of the room, the press where Miss D'Arcy had kept all her valuables lying open, its contents strewn over the floor, one of the chairs upset and broken, caught Kitty Macan's eye, and thoughts of robbery, perhaps murder, flashed into her mind. Quick as thought she locked the door, and taking the key with her, rushed out and down the river-bank until she came abreast of Chapel House. Here, by dint of waving her apron and shouting, she soon attracted the notice of the clerk. He was just about to unlock the gate for the people to come in to seven o'clock mass, and flinging down the keys he ran across the road and down to the river's edge.

'The mistress is dead!' shrieked Kitty. 'Run! I am just after finding her in a chair. Oh Lord! run and tell his reverence to come at once.'

She waved her arms and gesticulated like one distraught. Her grief for her old mistress had by this time asserted itself over the surprise, and she was crying heartily.

The sacristan crossed himself first, and then ran as fast as he could up the garden to the door of Chapel House. But he had not reached the foot of the steps when Father

Conroy, clad in cassock and biretta, showed his burly form at the chapel door.

'Eh, what? Miss D'Arcy found dead in her chair this morning? Peace, woman!' he shouted to Kitty, whose figure that moment caught his eye; 'I will be with you now. Warn Father Collins,' he said, addressing the sacristan; 'send word to the convent, and get all ready for a dead mass.'

Then, picking up his soutane with both hands, he set his legs in motion, and ran down the road to the upper bridge, crossed the river, and in a wonderfully little time was at the Fir House.

Kitty Macan was waiting for him. Her two assistants Rody and Judy had run off to town to bring things rendered necessary by the sad event in the household, and above all to acquaint the people.

'Where are the children?' was his first word on reaching the house.

'Miss Marion in dere,' said Kitty, pointing to Miss D'Arcy's room, 'the oder child is putting on her clothes. Fader, dere is writin' dere on de table; you should see to it.'

He was in the room now, standing close to where Marion knelt, sobbing beside the chair where Miss D'Arcy's corpse still remained. He laid one hand on the girl's head soothingly, leaned over her kneeling figure, and looked at the half-finished letter to himself, blotted where Juliet's dying hands had let fall the pen. He had not more than understood its purport, when he uttered a loud cry, and gathered up the papers hastily in his hand.

'God has spoken at last. God has done this,' he said, with a great sob in his voice. 'Marion,' he said, 'where is Godfrey?'

'Oh, who can tell? who can tell, indeed?' she replied with a despairing burst. 'He went out last night at seven. He may not return until to-morrow.'

'Listen to me now,' said Father Paul, putting his hand on her shoulder. 'I am going away for it may be some days, this very morning, by the up mail train from Cork.

Marion, Father Collins will see to all that is necessary. I shall be back for the funeral. But you will hear from me. Kitty, you have to see to——' he pointed to the corpse. 'Lose not a minute.'

'I know, your reverence ; I have sent for Miss Johnston, and Peggy Feelan, and Mrs. Cadogan. Dey's all coming immediately, and we'll lay out de room—and, oh Lord !' burst out Kitty, 'to say she died without her clergy.'

'Not a word of that,' growled Father Paul, menacing her with uplifted forefinger. 'She is a saint in heaven this minute.'

Kitty Macan received this rebuke with a deep curtsy, and disturbed as she had been by the fact that her beloved mistress had departed without priestly assistance, ever afterwards maintained that her case was one apart, unusual and special. In fact, before night-time, she had contrived to impress all the Barrettstown people with the idea that Miss D'Arcy had a special dispensation of her own from the Pope.

Father Paul stood for one instant looking at Juliet where she lay. Long-forgotten, half a century and more old, scenes rose once again before his eyes. He was an old man, but he was not so old as Miss D'Arcy, and he recollected her the beauty of a Limerick season, and when every one used to turn their heads to look after her when she rode out with her father. Then came the troubles of the D'Arcy's, the break up of the big house, and the scattering of its inmates, and from the time Juliet had been twenty years of age until when well past sixty she made her way to Barrettstown to live, bringing with her the children of Godfrey Mauleverer and her niece poor Ismay D'Arcy, Father Paul had seen and heard nothing of her.

'Poor Miss D'Arcy !' thought Father Paul compassionately, looking at her with an ineffable pity in his eyes. 'What patient and long-suffering souls some women have ! God bless them !'

The door that led into her own bedroom was open, and through its window, which faced the east, a long brilliant beam of the morning sun stole in, and lighted up the dead woman's face as with a saintly halo. Her snow-white hair

seemed almost turned to gold. The waxen pallor of her face was translucent. Father Paul, suddenly impressed, knelt down and prayed with fervour, the tears running down his grim old face.

'My God!' cried Kitty, struck also by the sight, 'what a beautiful corpse she'll be!'

At that moment the sound of feet made itself heard without. The people whom Kitty had sent for had arrived, and the two mourners retired, leaving the corpse to their ministrations.

'I must leave by the morning mail,' said Father Conroy. She had accompanied him to the gate. 'I'll run up to Dublin and take the mail to Scotland. Before that creature is laid in the ground I will see this out. Mary Johnston will stay with you and Gertrude. Father Collins will do all you want, and as I go through the town I'll give directions to have Godfrey sent after. It is terrible—it is frightful, so it is, that he should not be here at such a moment!'

'Why go to Scotland, father, now? What is it for?'

'You had better wait till I come back to ask that,' he replied, in such a tone that Marion felt frightened. She returned to the house, and before long, as he had promised, Father Conroy's housekeeper arrived to take the management of affairs, and Marion was left to indulge her sorrow undisturbed. She and Gertrude retired to an upper room, and left the nether portion of the house to Kitty and Miss Johnston, who did everything, and wrangled together for supremacy all the time. They laid out the corpse, draped the room in white, and lighted any number of wax candles. Miss Johnston made the sacristan bring candlesticks from the vestry. The nuns sent flowers, and two nuns came in person—a tremendous compliment—and repeated the prayers for the dead. Everybody came to the house—Peter Quin and his wife, the doctor, the bank manager, and their respective wives, the hotel people, and all the congregation of the parish chapel. Each was conducted to the room where Miss D'Arcy lay in quasi state, and when there knelt down before the little table, on which stood her own ivory crucifix between lighted candles, and said a prayer,

after which the visitor admired the beauty of the defunct, and then passed out and into the room on the other side of the hall, where Miss Johnston, attired in her black silk dress, received all the inquiries for the health of the family, and dispensed 'sherry wine' and brandy and whisky, which last Kitty Macan and Rody had ordered in unlimited quantities from Quin's shop. Nobody failed to pay this last tribute of respect to Miss D'Arcy, two people alone excepted, and these two were old Mrs. Ahearne and her husband. They were too broken, too wretched and despairing, to care to show themselves. Mrs. Ahearne remembered but too well the day that she and Mary Johnston had gone to Fir House to acquaint Miss D'Arcy with the grand match her son was making. She could not, she dared not, enter that house again. Luke was in prison, having first squandered the greater portion of his wife's dowry. The lease was sold over their heads. They were to be out of Lambert's Castle before Christmas, and both of them were desperate. The old woman's mind was giving way rapidly, and Ahearne himself resolved to go to America, so great was his bitterness and shame.

Save these unfortunates, every one was present, and only for the fact of Tighe O'Malley being in the Castle, the shops would have closed their shutters. Even the beggars who used to salute Juliet's bath-chair as it passed them at mass on Sundays, collected in a crowd at the hall doorsteps, and prayed to be allowed to enter.

CHAPTER XXXIX

'So we see death exempts not a man from being, but only presents an alteration ; yet there are some men (I think) that stand otherwise persuaded. . . . No, these are not the men which have bespoken death, or whose looks are assured to entertain a thought of time.'

TIGHE O'MALLEY and Lord Ansdale were at breakfast in the small morning-room at the Castle. Neither had gone to bed. They had stayed up all night in expectation of the attack that had been promised by Godfrey, and which never came. Both were tired and worn, Tighe especially so ; his eyes were all bloodshot, his dress disordered. Every other minute he rose, looked out of the window, or walked up and down the room restlessly. Not a word was spoken by either of them. The outer world seemed lost to Chichele.

It was on the stroke of nine when a servant entered.

'Mr. Lethbridge, sir, sent word to tell you Miss D'Arcy at the Fir House died suddenly last night ; found dead in her chair this morning, sir.'

O'Malley started violently. Chichele seemed roused into life once more, as if by a galvanic shock.

'Trouble on the top of trouble ! Oh Lord !' groaned O'Malley. 'Found dead in her chair ! I wish to heaven they were all dead—I do indeed !'

'I don't,' said Chichele. 'Tighe, old man, listen to me.'

'I'm listening to you ; eh ?'

'I am going to marry Marion Mauleverer, the sister of that poor boy who was here last night.'

O'Malley jumped up in such a manner that his chair fell over on the floor.

'I beg your pardon—Ansdale, dear fellow! but my nerves are quite unstrung this morning. Yes, yes—you were saying——'

'I have an appointment with Father Conroy her guardian this morning at ten o'clock.'

O'Malley stretched out both arms to their widest extent, and then clasped his hands at the back of his head.

'I had an appointment with him once at ten o'clock in the morning,' he said, after an interval spent in walking to and fro. 'I recollect it well. I was at breakfast in this very room all by myself when his message came. That poor old woman who is lying dead this morning wanted me calmly to take her word for it that these children were born in lawful wedlock, that I was to abdicate in favour of that young desperado whom you saw here last night.' He stopped suddenly, seeing his companion wince.

'I beg your pardon again. I don't really know what I am saying. Chichele, that coffee is cold, is it not?'

'I don't care—I don't want it.'

'Chichele,' said Tighe, 'you have thought this well over, haven't you—eh?'

'No!' was the prompt answer, 'never thought for a minute—never intend to!'

'But—Ida? Your people?'

'Be damned!'

Tighe groaned, and in sheer desperation began to eat. There was a silent interval now, which lasted fully ten minutes.

'O'Malley,' began Chichele, 'I want you to come with me to Father Conroy.'

'Yes. Let's have a trap round. Ring! I feel somehow as if I couldn't walk. I'll go over to Fir House also, along with you, Chichele. We'll both go there and leave cards, eh? Yes! and I'll tell you what, I'll send flowers down, eh? Ring! That's a good fellow!'

The prospect even of action was a visible relief to O'Malley. He seemed as if he could not stop still for a

moment. Before ten minutes had elapsed they were driving down the avenue. The air seemed exquisite to Chichele, sweet and purified as it was by the rainstorm of the night, after being pent up in a sort of fortress as he had been. Once out of the gate his eyes sought the Quaker's house on the other side of the river. The green gates were shut as usual, and as usual the thicket of laurels obscured the view, but he could see that there was some unwonted stir going on. He fancied that he heard voices, and the grass-grown roadway leading to the gate had actually some dozen people at least coming to or going from the house.

Poor Marion! he thought. What grief she must be in; and he determined to try, later in the day, to see her. She could come down to the garden to see him for one moment surely.

Tighe on his side was mechanically smoking a cigar. The mischief caused by the storm gave him something to think of. One of the finest elms lay right across the drive; they had to turn the dog-cart in upon the grass to avoid it. Branches were strewed everywhere, and there was a perfect wilderness of dead leaves. The flower beds were all buried out of sight in them. Arrived at the gate, they could see evidence of similar mischief all along both sides of the river. There had been a flood during the night, which had since subsided, leaving a mud deposit on the green selvages of the banks. All sorts of things were floating down on the current—branches, twigs, and long filaments of moss, hay also, showing where the torrent had caught some slothful farmer's neglected stacks and swept them off with it in its course.

Chapel House was soon reached, and Chichele with a beating heart ran up the steps and knocked. The door was opened by the sacristan.

'His reverence is not inside, sir. He is gone away for a couple of days, your honour.'

'Are you sure? I had an appointment with him to-day.'

'I am after leaving him over to the station my own self, your honour, and he will not be back before the funeral.'

'But—Miss D'Arcy is dead.'

'God rest her soul! she is so, your honour, and meself has an idea, do you see, that it is all because of some bit of writing his reverence found lying out there that he is gone this——' Here he put his hand over his mouth, and stopped. Tighe O'Malley was ascending the steps. The sacristan bowed low.

'Away, is he? gone after Godfrey, I'll be bound! Come down to the barrack and see Lethbridge. All I can say is, I have that boy on my brain. If the Fenians murder him, after what he tried to do for me—I—I'll never get over it. I'll have the country scoured by mounted police—never stop until he is found.'

Chichele answered him only by a heavy sigh.

They entered the sub-inspector's room, and were told that he would be with them presently. Tighe threw himself into Lethbridge's armchair, flung the stump of his cigar into the grate, and remained moodily silent. Chichele seated himself in the window-seat, and gazed out on the street, hoping to see some one whom he could identify with the Fir House. It presented nothing novel in the way of food for meditation; the same active-bodied pigs—he fancied he recognised them—wandered from gutter to gutter, the same speckled cocks and hens, the same flocks of long-legged noisy geese stepping leisurely and unsteadily over the cobblestones, the same foreign-looking beggars—and over and above it all, the brawl and murmur of Barrett-water, heard more and more distinctly now that the tall poplars and the chestnuts were so nearly stripped.

The long car from the hotel returned from the railway station, empty save for a solitary commercial traveller and his tin cases. Chichele's eyes followed the jolting old machine drawn by a pair of wretched sore-backed old jades until it passed beyond his ken. Then he once more fixed his eyes on the Limerick Road at the other side of the bridge, and speculated whether or not a couple of country-women, each with her mass of petticoats and blue-hooded cloak, exactly shaped like a dinner bell, were going to the Quaker's house or not.

O'Malley rose. He could not have remained quiet for another instant, and, after a short period of inaction, pulled the bell. A constable answered it.

'Does Mr. Lethbridge know that I am here?' he demanded.

'He does, sir,' answered the man. 'You'll see him in a minute. There's some men with him have brought in some——'

But at that moment Lethbridge's voice made itself heard shouting out as he rushed up the stone stairs two or three at a step and burst into the room.

'O'Malley! O'Malley! Here's a business! That unfortunate boy——'

'Shot?' cried Tighe leaping up, his face blanched suddenly. 'Don't tell me they have murdered him! Ah! Eh?'

'I don't know, nor any one else yet. His dead body has just been found a little below the bridge. They have got it at Carmody's not ten minutes ago. The flood washed it up nearly on the bank. One of the women saw it when she went down for water. I must go down.'

'And I!' cried Tighe, snatching his hat.

'And I!' echoed Chichele; and pellmell they rushed down the stairs, out and into the street.

Lethbridge, a wiry, active man, led the way. Tighe O'Malley and Chichele ran beside him, over the bridge and down the cart-track that led to the reclaimed lands. A crowd that increased every minute followed at their heels. They shaped their steps for a group of people who were gathered close to the river-bank at the edge of a strip of green land called Carmody's Farm. The moaning and wailing of women's voices reached them from afar.

O'Malley shouldered the people right and left, and they had soon reached the centre of the group.

There, stretched upon the grassy sward at their feet, his bright young life and all its splendid possibilities for ever ended, Godfrey Mauleverer lay dead and cold.

CHAPTER XL

**'Cease to lament for that thou canst not help,
And study help from that which thou lament'st,
Time is the nurse and breeder of all good.'**

'Let the frame of things disjoint ; both the worlds suffer ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep in the affliction of these terrible dreams that shake us nightly. Better be with the dead, whom we, to gain our place, have sent to peace than in the torture of the mind to lie in restless ecstasy.'

'God!' burst from O'Malley's lips. 'It is he indeed ! Who found him ? Where ?'

The woman who had found the corpse lying in the sedges, whither the flood had carried and left it in the night, was kneeling beside the head, wiping the stains away with her apron, and stroking back the long dank locks of hair. She looked up in Tighe's face by way of answer to his question, then resumed her occupation.

'Lethbridge, this is murder !' cried O'Malley, flinging himself on his knees beside the body. 'They have murdered the boy !'

Both knelt down. Tighe lifted and turned the face round towards himself. On one temple a bluish, slightly lacerated mark was visible. That was all. They examined his head—there was not a trace of a wound.

'Send up for Daly !' shouted Tighe. 'Carry him up to the barrack. I'll have justice done ! If they have murdered the boy, I'll know it !'

The policeman got an empty sack and laid the body on

it. Then four of them lifted it easily, and before long the barrack was reached. Doctor Daly was summoned hastily, and together with Lethbridge he examined the corpse thoroughly. Not a trace of a wound or mark could be found save the contusion on the temple, which in itself was not sufficient to account for his death.

'Is that a blow, or accidental?' asked Tighe, pointing to the mark.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. 'Did he get a blow and was thrown into the river after that? Did he fall or stun himself, and so drown? Eh? Who can tell that, Mr. O'Malley? He died by drowning—I'll certify that. As for this,' he indicated the bruised temple, 'no one could say whether that was caused by a fall or a blow.'

'When he left us last night,' said Chichele, 'it was something about half-past ten. Can you not say how long he has been dead?'

'Well, you see, the blood is not fluid—that's all the test we have—consequently he must be more than six hours dead.'

'O'Malley, he used to walk across the weir at your gates, I know that. The horse was found in the park this morning by the keepers. Could he have fallen in, having attempted to cross it in his excited state in the dark last night? The storm, some sudden gust of wind, might have overbalanced him.'

'Let us go and examine the weir, and inquire if he were at home during the night.'

'Miss D'Arcy, his grand-aunt, died suddenly last night, you know,' said the doctor. 'I was there this morning. Heart disease and a paralytic seizure! It was curious though—she had never gone to bed, and the old woman-servant had left her to all appearance well at a few minutes before eleven.'

'Just as well she is dead,' said O'Malley. 'This'—nodding towards the table—'would have killed her. Now, what's to be done? These poor girls must be told, and I hear Father Conroy has gone away and will not be back until the day of the funeral. Lethbridge,' he said after a

pause, 'I'll get Father Collins to go and break this to them. Telegraph to Cork for a shell. You know we must send the body to the mill-house.'

'I shall see to all that,' said Chichele quietly.

'Yes—yes, to be sure!' said O'Malley. 'I wish my wife were at home. I tell you what; I'll send for Mrs. Marchmont. Send a man on a horse to Roundstone House to tell Mrs. Marchmont what has happened, and to say that I wish her to go to Fir House and break this to the family; and ask Captain Marchmont to come to me.'

'Mrs. Marchmont's not at home, sir,' said a constable, stepping forward. 'She went to England ten days ago.'

'O'Malley, let us go to Fir House!' cried Chichele. 'I cannot bear this any longer. If these people run to tell her! It is too dreadful!'

They mounted the dog-cart and crossed the bridge, the last not without difficulty, for an immense crowd had gathered now about the barrack, and the lamentations and outcries were heartrending. Chichele was glad to get on to the quiet river-road. Hurry as they did, the news had reached the house before their arrival. People were crowded round the house door, and moaning and keening and clapping of hands filled the air lugubriously.

'See, Chichele,' said Tighe, taking out his pocket-book. 'Let me see,' he said. 'I have some of Blanche's cards. Just wait an instant.' He wrote with the pencil which was attached to his watch-chain some formula of sympathy on his visiting-cards, and handed them down to the impatient Chichele, who pushed in through the bystanders quickly, and made his way to the door.

'Stand back there! Hush! H'sh.' A strange woman, whom he did not recognise as one of the Fir House retainers, advanced the moment that he appeared on the steps, and, waving back the crowd at the same time, imperiously commanded silence.

'I came to inquire——' he said, but at that moment he heard a cry resound through the house. He fancied that he recognised Marion's voice, and he stopped, unable to continue. The thought of her, desolate, unfriended,

and in such terrible affliction, overpowered him. His own impotence to help her was the hardest of all to bear. For a moment everything seemed misty and indistinct. His breath seemed insufficient, or the air was stifling. He put his hand against the door-post for an instant.

'The ladies are in great trouble, sir. God help them ! 'Twas enough to lose their poor aunt, but Mr. Godfrey to be killed on them that way, 'tis terrible !' She began to cry, and the people without, seeing this, resumed the keen ing and rocking.

'Is any one with them ?' he asked. 'Are they alone ?'

'My God ! no, sir, they are not alone,' replied Peggy Feelan, as shocked as if he had suggested some impropriety. 'They's two of the holy nuns with them, sir, your honour, an' Miss Johnston from Chapel House, and Fader Collins. Dey's all above stairs wit' dem, sir.'

This was something better than he had expected, and it was with a sense of relief that he handed her the cards. Peggy curtsied down to the ground.

'Wouldn't you walk in, your honour, to take a look of "herself" ?' she asked, opening the door of Miss D'Arcy's old sitting-room, and exposing to view a mass of flowers and wax lights.

'No, no ; it would—I cannot go in,' he said hastily, shrinking back. 'No, no ; it would be an intrusion.' He slipped an honorarium into Peggy Feelan's hand, and made good his retreat to the gate.

'I saw no one,' he said, climbing up beside Tighe ; 'but there are nuns with them, and the priest and the housekeeper.'

Tighe was silent, and Chichele was glad to be left to his own meditations. He wished he had not seen the room, transformed and changed as it was now. He would have preferred the image stamped on his memory, and so often, so fondly traced, of the scene he had witnessed there—it seemed as though years had elapsed since—the old woman with her quaint face and snowy hair rolled under her lace cap, sitting at the head of that queer dinner-table, and the strange trio of young creatures before her. Godfrey,

in his wild picturesque beauty, rose before him once more. The thought of him now, lying dead in the miserable barrack in the town, was unbearable in its hideousness.

Tighe broke the silence at last.

'Er—about what you told me this morning. I am going to telegraph to Blanche to come on immediately—to start to-night. If she does that, she may be here the day after to-morrow. It's only right, you know.'

'Thanks,' replied Chichele indifferently enough.

'I—I don't think I could stand this place until Blanche comes. I've had too great a shock. I shall go down to Cork. Come with me? Eh?'

'Leave Barretstown *now*! now! Impossible!'

'All right! As you like.'

Tighe O'Malley felt truly that it would be impossible for him to remain in the vicinity any longer just now. It was not that he wanted to escape the gloom and melancholy of the place, but that he found his very existence intolerable to him. It was no want, but excess of feeling. If he did not find some counter-irritation he thought he would surely go mad.

'Open any telegrams, and send them to the County Club. There he is—there's Marchmont. I say, let him get up beside me. I want him to see to the funeral arrangements, and to send Father Collins money.'

CHAPTER XLI

‘When an argument is over, how many weighty reasons does a man recollect which his heat and violence made him utterly forget!’

TIGHE O’MALLEY was disturbed in the midst of his processes of distraction by a telegram from Father Conroy which Chichele sent him on. It was explicitly worded, and in length exceeded the prescribed number of words.

‘What is the meaning of this? and what in the world is he doing in Glasgow of all places, and at such a time? Wants an interview immediately on his arrival at Barretts-town on most urgent business. Phew!’ whistled Tighe. ‘The morning mail train up will be lots of time.’

He dismissed the telegram from his mind, and sat down to whist, which, with an interval of loo, he played steadily and for high stakes all night. Then having bathed, changed his clothes, and breakfasted, he took himself off in the up train, feeling considerably more in his usual form.

Captain Marchmont had driven Chichele over to meet him. Both were standing on the platform.

‘Well!’ cried Tighe. ‘How do, old boy? How d’ye, Marchmont? What’s the news now? Hay, what’s the news?’

Both were silent. Tighe, as if a thought suddenly struck him, looked from one to the other. ‘What is up, I say? No fresh disaster, for heaven’s sake? Not—not my wife?’ he gasped.

‘Oh no! no! It is nothing of any importance *now*, O’Malley!’ Captain Marchmont made haste to say. ‘Nothing you need distress yourself about at all.’

'What *is* it, then?' snapped Tighe with an execration. 'Chichele, tell me, I have had sensations enough this week to last my lifetime.'

'*This*,' began Captain Marchmont, speaking very slowly and impressively. 'Miss D'Arcy recovered her senses before she died, and placed in Father Conroy's hands full evidence, or proof, or indicated to him how to prove fully the marriage of her niece Ismay D'Arcy with your cousin Mauleverer. That was the business which called him away in such a hurry; and he has telegraphed home that he has obtained full proofs, witnesses, entry of this Scotch or broomstick marriage, etc., and is bringing everything that is necessary home with him to-day. I say, O'Malley, you are not faint, are you?'

'Faint!' echoed Tighe, who had caught his arm, and was leaning heavily on it. 'Good reason to be, I think!'

Chichele hastened to the stationmaster's office, and procured a glass of water. O'Malley swallowed a mouthful. 'Oh, what a tragedy! This will kill me! My nerves are shattered completely.'

'Give him your arm, Lord Ansdale,' said the agent; and so they passed out of the station, and got into Captain Marchmont's dog-cart, which was waiting.

'Poor boy! poor boy!' exclaimed Tighe. Then, after a moment's silence, 'What a sell for Father Conroy it'll be. I declare to you, Chichele, I'm on the right side of the ditch, no doubt, but, faith! I feel for that poor old chap and what he is coming home to to-day.'

'Well, well! There are two of them left, you know. Poor girls! they are to be pitied, indeed! God's ways are not our ways,' observed Captain Marchmont.

O'Malley folded his arms, and leaned back in a fit of depression and gloom, from which nothing could rouse him. Chichele, who, from anxiety and distress, had been unable to sleep for some nights past, was only too glad of the silence.

Not one of them broke it; only the crash of a stone as the wheel took it in its onward course, the measured beat of the horse's feet, the caw of a rook overhead, as it flew

across the road, disturbed the stillness of the autumn air. It all passed before Chichele's eyes like some unreal phantasmagoria that might at any minute shrivel up and disperse, leaving things as they were.

'Marchmont,' said O'Malley at last, 'get Godfrey's corpse, you know, carried up to the Castle and placed in the dining-room. As soon as Father Conroy hears about the funeral let notices be sent out to the tenantry. Whatever we can do now—is the least——'

'I shall meet Father Conroy at the train this afternoon,' Chichele said. 'I must speak to him at once.'

'The inquest was held yesterday. I saw it in the Cork paper this morning,' said Tighe. "'Accidental death" they only found. Well, until the day of judgment we shall never know if that be true or no.'

'Lethbridge has information that after he left the Fenians that night in the shaking bog they really were going to follow him and attack the house, but some one warned them that the thing was blown upon and the house fully defended. Lethbridge says not one of them would harm the boy.'

'There is some awful mystery below it. Suicide is out of the question. Accident? I can't understand how that could have been. Did he go back to that house or not after he left us? How was it that the horse was found loose in the park?'

'Who was to tell? The servants at the Quaker's house heard no one enter during the night. But even if they had—he has been so much in the habit of coming in late at night. For the last six months that boy has turned night into day.'

An impatient gesture from O'Malley was his only comment on this

CHAPTER XLII

‘It had been hard for him that spake it to have put more truth and untruth together in a few words than in that speech: “Whosoever is delighted in solitude, is either a wild beast or a god.”’

THE day wore on somehow, lengthily and drearily to Chichele and his host, and at last the hour arrived which was to bring the expected travellers. Tighe went to the station to meet his wife, and with his characteristic eye to effect, brought Father Conroy home in the carriage with them. It was done as much out of good-natured sympathy as of premeditation, for the old priest had learned the news of Godfrey’s death in Dublin from a newspaper, and was almost prostrated by the shock.

With Father Conroy had come some strangers, the hotel-keeper and his brother, who had witnessed the runaway marriage of Captain Mauleverer and Ismay D’Arcy eighteen years ago. Captain Marchmont and Father Collins conveyed these to the hotel.

‘I’ll go down by and by with you, Father Conroy, and go into the thing,’ Tighe said, ‘if you see any necessity for it now. The sooner we let those people go home about their business the better.’

The carriage stopped at the Chapel House, and they all got down and went into the parish priest’s room. Lady Blanche was utterly exhausted. She had travelled straight on from Nice without stopping, and for a frail being like her the strain was overpowering. But she could not rest yet.

'Father Conroy, where are they—Marion and Gertrude?'

His reverence had let himself drop weightily into his usual seat before his writing-table, and was looking round him with a helpless, scared look. He seemed to have aged by twenty years; his hair was whiter; he had not shaved; his coat was travel-stained and worn; and his great shoulders were stooped as though the weight of trouble and grief had fallen in tangible and ponderous form upon them.

He raised his head, which had been sunk on his breast, on hearing Lady Blanche's question.

'Where are they?' he repeated. 'They—they should be at home. They tell me the body has been removed to the church at twelve o'clock to-day. Yes, poor children, they are surely at home.'

'Tighe,' she said, rising from her chair, 'why are we here? You know we do not need to wait to see the proofs of—well—that those persons have brought. Those poor girls are alone—it ought not to be so. Let us go to them. Father Conroy, you will go with me and Chichele.'

'Yes, yes, that's the best thing, Blanche!' assented Tighe heartily.

Father Paul turned his eyes on her with a look that was dog-like in its gratitude and simplicity.

'I cannot bear to think of them being left there in this way. Dear Father Conroy, I will only too gladly take them—Marion until she marries my cousin, and Gertrude—Oh, let us go to them without delay.'

Father Paul's head drooped for an instant. 'I will only too gladly take them.' The words seemed to cut their way through him. 'Yes,' he said to himself, 'God has taken Miss D'Arcy and the boy. These were left, and now *she* will take them from me! God's will be done anyhow!' and with something like a groan he laid both hands on the table and raised himself with difficulty from his chair.

'You are right,' he said; 'our place is with them now.'

She rose at the same time. Chichele advanced quickly and drew her hand within his arm. He pressed it affectionately.

'*You* were always good to me, dear!' he said.

'Oh, Chichele, what a shock this is! But,' she added, after they had all got into the carriage, 'it may be such a blessing to us all.'

They said no more. Lady Blanche pulled down her veil, and lay back in the cushions—sheer excitement alone sustained her. Father Conroy's lips were moving as though in prayer. He took not the slightest notice of the salutations and reverences with which the awe-struck people greeted him; but, bent almost double, he sat, motionless and silent, beside Lady Blanche on the back seat.

It was not long until they drew up at the gates of the Fir House. The carriage entrance had long been impracticable. Even if the green gates could have been opened, the overgrown shrubs behind forbade ingress. Lady Blanche descended with the united help of Chichele and the old priest, who, taking off his hat reverently when they reached the foot of the steps, walked in first, leaving them to follow him.

The funeral was to take place that day at three o'clock, and the coffin had been removed the previous night to the chapel, whence the procession was to set out. The sitting-room was empty, and had almost resumed its normal aspect. The bed had been put away, the white draperies all removed. The various articles of furniture had all been returned to their usual positions, all, save a couple,—Juliet D'Arcy's chair and the little table which used to stand by her elbow. The chair was put away in a corner, where it looked so odd and out-of-place that it was hardly recognisable. The little table was nowhere to be seen, nor anything else that had been hers. As Father Paul's tired eyes noted the homely, once familiar scene, now so desolate and strange and empty, a gray mist gathered before them and obscured it all—mercifully perhaps. He moved back quickly, and stepping to one side, pushing the door open as he did so with one hand, motioned to Chichele and Lady Blanche to enter. Then he closed the door, and for a moment stood as if listening for some one in the hall.

The silence was unbroken, save for the dismal cries of the parrot, which had been exiled to the kitchen, where the turf-smoke was choking it.

‘Could they be in the church?’ he said aloud, striking his walking-stick on the floor.

But at that instant a door opened above, and hasty feet came rushing along the corridor. In one moment Marion and Gertrude were clinging to him, sobbing convulsively.

‘Why did you go away? Father Paul, how could you leave us?’ insisted Gertrude, pulling at his sleeve. Marion said not a word. She looked at him with wild eyes like those of some hunted creature.

‘Oh dear! oh dear!’ moaned he; ‘and to say I was late—that everything is too late! Oh, the poor boy! the poor young boy! gone—gone!’

Marion quivered from head to foot.

‘He is not here, Father Paul, not even here! They had him brought up to the Castle. Why? why?’ demanded Gertrude.

‘Silence!’ ordered he. ‘That is the proper place. His own house—and yours!’

Gertrude laid her head against his arm and cried quietly. The child was exhausted with grief and excitement. Merely to see him again comforted her.

Marion also felt a sudden sense come over her of calm and restfulness. It seemed as if a year had passed since she last saw the rugged kindly features of their old friend. She let herself fall into a seat, and, without speaking, just looked at him, content and soothed merely to know his presence. Her eyes were heavy with weeping. It seemed to her as if she had cried her last. She had not slept nor eaten since his departure, and a sort of burning fever consumed her.

Father Paul stroked Gertrude’s tangled hair silently, looking at Marion the while, but unconscious of them both. The vision of the empty, changed room, and all that it meant for him, his own loss, filled him entirely. He was old—he was alone! Miss D’Arcy was gone; Godfrey was taken; and now these. These he was about to give up of his own accord. Then it would be an empty, an altogether last year’s nest, torn and riven, unvisited, desolate.

He took a hand of either.

'Lady Blanche is there,' he said hoarsely, 'and Lord Ansdale—for you, Marion, child. You will go home to the Castle with her. Now, come!'

He opened the door and led them both in. Lady Blanche was standing, fevered with impatience and nervousness, Chichele, hardly less so, by her side. She looked from one to the other eagerly, yet half afraid. Gertrude held fast to Father Paul, her flushed excited face upturned to Lady Blanche. Chichele had taken and was holding both Marion's hands. Her white sad face proved more appealing to her new friend, for she stooped forward suddenly and kissed her.

'Little girl,' she said then to Gertrude, 'will you be my daughter?'

Gertrude made a half step forward, still not relaxing her hold of Father Paul.

Lady Blanche laid her white hands on the child's head, and drew her gently towards herself until the tangled beautiful hair was resting on her breast.

'Gertrude,' she said again, 'will you not? Will you take me instead of your poor aunt—instead of poor Godfrey?'

But a quick sob shook her as the answer came. 'Not Godfrey! Oh, Godfrey, poor Godfrey!'

THE END



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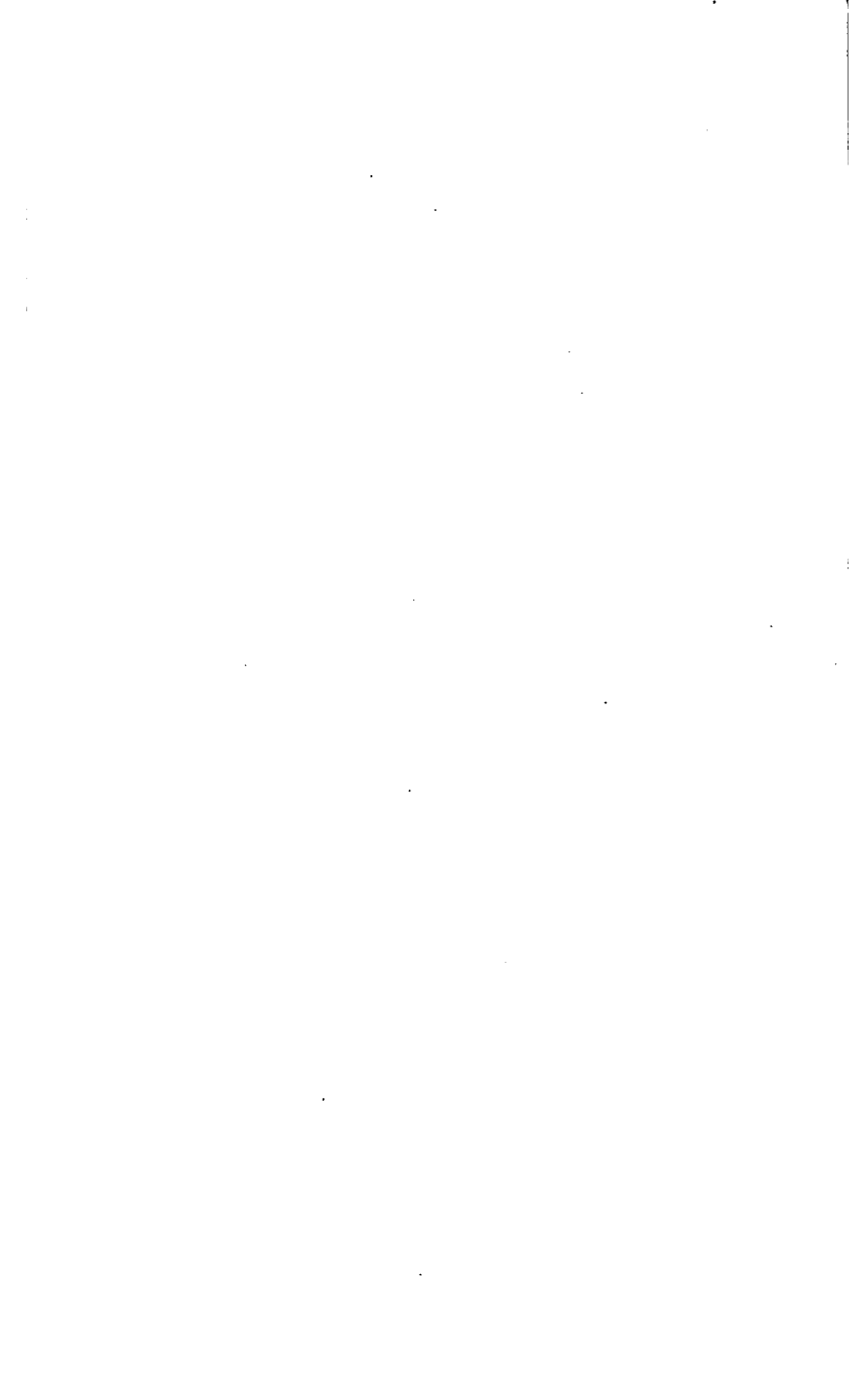
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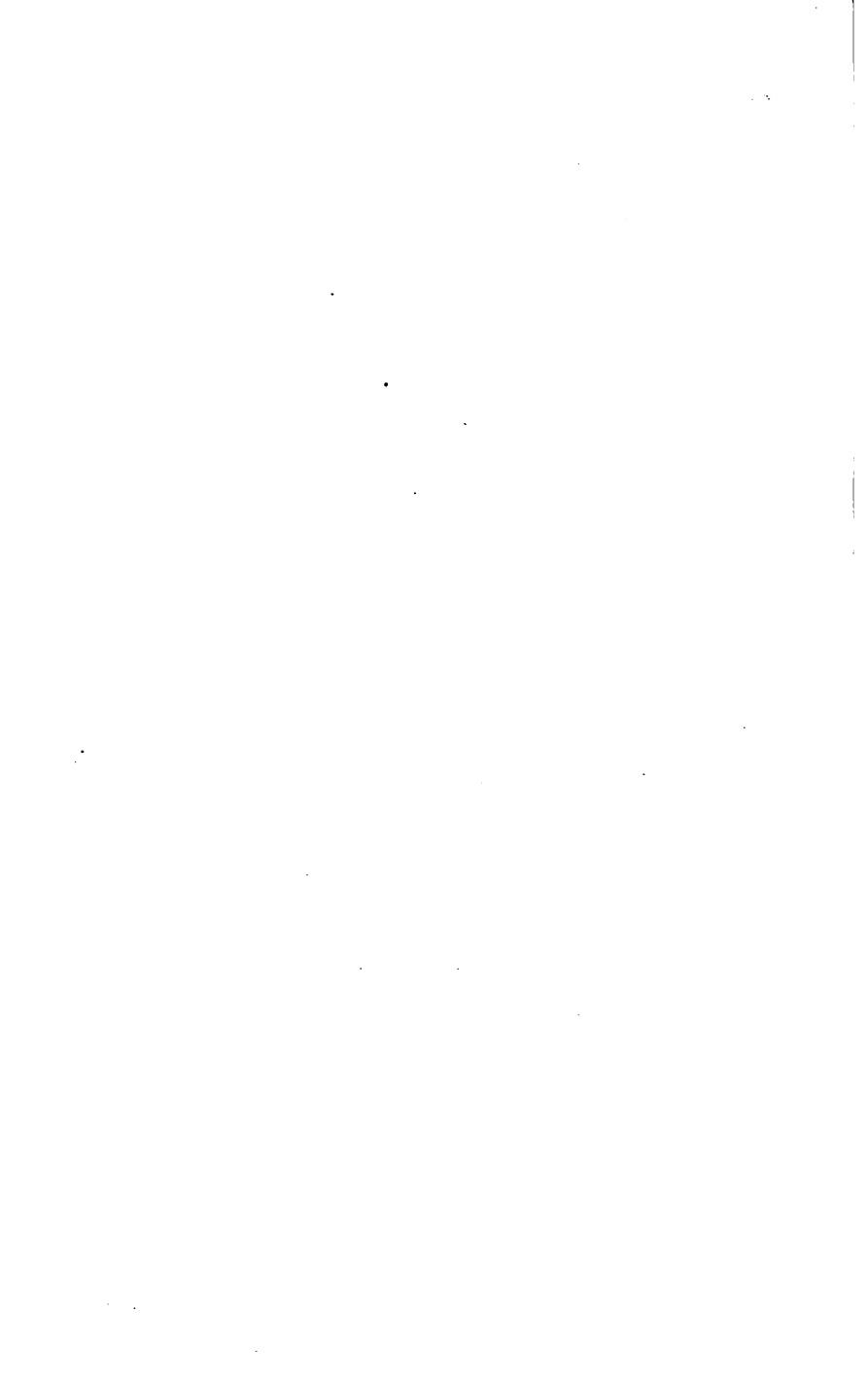
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